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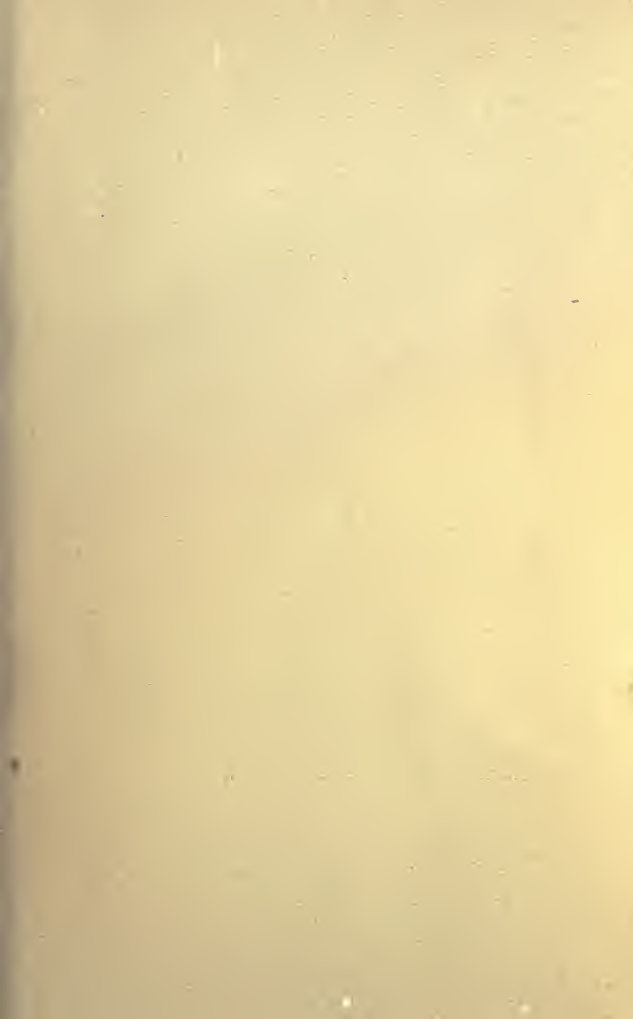
Christmas 1897.





**VOCES ACADEMICÆ**

VOGES ACADEMICAE





VOCES ACADEMICÆ

# VOCES ACADEMICÆ

BY

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WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY J. M. G. ROBERTSON

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## PREFACE

THESE sketches—a very imperfect attempt to indicate some of the phases of modern Oxford life—have already received their public baptism of print, having originally appeared (with the exception of the last three which were published in *The Oxford Magazine*) in the columns of *The Westminster Gazette*. The writer is indebted to the Editors and Proprietors of both those papers for the permission so courteously granted to issue them in their present collective form.

OXFORD, *November*, 1897.

## PREFACE

*These volumes are a very important supplement to the series of the papers of Richard Henry Stoddard, and are highly valued for their value as a collection of papers having original interest with the exception of the last three which were published in the *Quarterly Review* in the columns of Mr. Stoddard. The writer is indebted to the Editor and proprietors of both these papers for the permission to compile and print them in their present collective form.*

LONDON, November, 1857.



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I

# AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

SCENE - *The famous Gardens at Lady Godiva  
Hall in the Summer Term.*

TIME - *About 4.30 p.m.*

OCCASION - *The Annual Garden Party.*

On the lawn the distinguished and amiable Lady President encouragingly shaking hands with her guests, smiling vaguely so as to convey the pleasing impression that they are her dearest friends. Dotted round her, in attitudes of varying *ennui*, female dons, heads of houses and their wives, college tutors and their wives, and numerous ladies not belonging to the University, but who are carefully disguised to look as if they did. Countless ill-assorted pairs of undergraduates (with the air of flies in amber) and women students parade aimlessly about endeavouring to conceal their boredom; in the background languid tennis, and still more languid spectators. From time to time white-robed young ladies emerge on to the balcony, and sing with flabby zeal. The costumes range from frock coats and silk hats, or the last creation of Redfern's, to cotton blouses and serge skirts, Norfolk jackets and flannels.

OBSCURANTIST WARDEN [*on the terrace, who eyes the spectacle severely*] And this is what they call the higher education of women! I can't see why they come to Oxford to do this sort of thing.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

PROGRESSIVE HEAD OF A COLLEGE. My dear Warden! an Oriental scene, with nineteenth-century appointments; [*deprecatingly*] you must relax the bow sometimes, eh? *Non semper tendit Artemis.* Ha! ha!

O. W. To ruin their digestion with ices, and the men by flirting. Higher education, indeed!

P. H. [*slily*] Is that why you give garden parties yourself, eh? Come, come; all work and no play makes Jill a very——

O. W. Plain girl. She is that already.

P. H. [*still more slily*] Do you include Miss Kitty in *that* category, eh?

[*The O.W. turns indignantly away to his wife, who through her pince-nez is inspecting the lawn with malice prepense.*]

MRS. WARDEN [*ineffably*] Who are all these women? I declare I don't know a soul. Really, Oxford is intolerable with this rabble let loose upon it. [*Smitten with maternal fears, and putting up her eyeglasses.*] Where is Kitty? She might at least introduce us to some of her friends.

P. H. [*wickedly*] Eh? Kitty's friends may not be yours though, eh?

[*He points to where Miss Kitty, behind a bush, is engaged in confidential conversation with two good-looking undergraduates, from whom she is immediately rescued with maternal force.*]

## AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

YOUNG COLLEGE TUTOR [*very much at sea, and studiously endeavouring to avoid his lady pupils*] I must get some tea. There is nothing else to be done, apparently. [*Makes for the tea-table, but pulls up short.*] Ah! I can't go now; the Darcys are there, and I haven't called on them for two terms.

[*He turns away sorrowfully, to run into an enthusiastic woman student.*]

E. W. S. [*who has been carefully stalking him*]. How d'ye do, Mr. Textbook?

C. T. [*feebly*] Charming afternoon, isn't it?

E. W. S. Oh, yes. [*Hurriedly*] Will you excuse me talking shop——

C. T. [*aghast, and still more feebly*] Can I get you some tea, or an ice, or——

E. W. S. [*with decision*] No, thank you, I never eat them. [*With a rush*] You know I am in the schools next week, and I just wanted to ask you about the foreign policy of William III.

C. T. [*forgetting himself, and mechanically*] William III.'s foreign policy may be divided into two distinct sections, the first——

[*He is saved by the Lady Sub-President pouncing on him with the words "May I introduce you to Miss Night Light," and dragging him off accordingly, to the disgust of the E. W. S.*]

FACETIOUS UNDERGRAD [*at tennis, to his partner*] Our opponent isn't much good at

pat-ball, I take it. [*To his rival, who has been netting the balls with vicious consistency*] The object of the game, you know, is to get the ball over the net, and not into it.

RIVAL UNDERGRAD [*apologetically to his indignant partner*] 'M afraid that's their set. So sorry. Been reading hard. Nothing puts the eye out like reading, don't-cher-know.

[*He swings his racquet jauntily, to hint what he might do if he didn't read so hard.*]

F. U. [*waggishly*] Or to put your partner's eye out as well. [*Confidentially to his own partner*] Touched him up a bit, eh?

F. U.'S PARTNER [*smiling sweetly*] You shouldn't be so cruel, when we have beaten them to love.

F. U. [*returning her smile*] But he does fancy himself so. [*He retires with his partner to the strawberries and cream.*]

COLLEGE TUTOR [*again emerging*] Free at last. . . . Why, there's Miss Kitty. I'll go and talk to her. *She won't talk shop.*

[*He strolls negligently in her direction.*]

AMOROUS UNDERGRAD [*who divines his aims and suddenly seizes him*] Ah! how d'ye do, Mr. Textbook? May I introduce you to my cousin? She is dying to know you, and is up in all your subjects. [*Introduces him at once to an anæmic, spectacled young lady, and then escorts Miss Kitty himself in triumph.*] By



## AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

Jove! that was a narrow squeak. Only just in time, too—two birds with one stone. My cousin will keep him tight for the rest of the afternoon, and leave me——

MISS KITTY [*coquettishly*] To be bored instead by you.

A. U. [*with reproachful adoration*] Oh! I say, that's too bad of you.

MISS K. Well, Dons can be very interesting. [*With pouting insistence*] They can.

A. U. Wait till you have to breakfast with them, that's all.

[*Miss K. blushes appropriately, and they seek a secluded seat.*]

A. U. [*pleadingly*] Now you will come to my picnic, won't you? Wednesday at Bossom's; 2.30 sharp.

MISS K. [*carelessly*] Oh, yes, I am coming. I have said so twice already.

A. U. There's to be an awful crowd. But I will bring my "Canader"; it just holds two, you know, so we'll have a good time.

MISS K. [*thinking silence the better part of etiquette, digs holes in the turf with her parasol. Then says slowly*] You are to be at the Randolph dance, aren't you?

A. U. [*with fervour*] Rather!

MISS K. [*shyly*] We are coming early, so—— [*Suggestive pause.*]

A. U. I'll be there. [*Sees the point, and adds hurriedly*] How many are you going to give me?

MISS K. [*demurely*] How stupid you are! I can't say; I haven't my programme here.

A. U. [*persistently*] But can't we settle it now? So much more comfortable, you know. [*Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought.*] Give me the odd numbers—do!

MISS K. What, all of them? That would be very odd! [*Smiles tantalisingly.*]

A. U. I am going to book them. [*He makes a note on his shirt-cuff accordingly.*]

MISS K. [*with affected pettishness*] Well, I suppose you must have them. I can't be even with you otherwise, can I? But what will mamma say?

A. U. Oh! mamma be——. [*He is suddenly aware of mamma rustling down on them.*] Ah, charming afternoon, Mrs. Matchem. We were looking for you everywhere, as Miss Kitty thought you would be going soon. [*Looks at his watch in inspiration.*] So sorry; I must run away and see after my cousin. Good-bye, Miss Kitty. Sure you won't have some more tea? No? Really? Good-bye, Mrs. Matchem. So glad we found you.

[*Hurries away like a man, leaving Miss Kitty to have it out with mamma.*]

SPORTING LADY STUDENT [*who has just been introduced to a long-haired undergrad, who looks like a cross between Torquemada and Henry Irving*] Do you play hockey?



## AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

LONG-HAIRED UNDERGRAD [*after a careful pause*] No; I don't play hockey.

S. L. S. [*with sublime pity*] Oh! you should. It is a ripping game.

L. H. U. [*with dainty nausea*] I am afraid I have no *penchant* for *ripping* games. [*Pause.*

S. L. S. [*cheerily*] You row, no doubt.

L. H. U. [*after reflection*] No; I don't row.

S. L. S. [*less cheerily*] You play cricket, perhaps?

L. H. U. [*calmly*] I have never played cricket.

S. L. S. [*feverishly*] Then it must be football.

L. H. U. [*with statuesque aversion*] I cannot even look at football.

S. L. S. [*in despair and triumph*] Ah! you bike?—[*L. H. U. looks bewildered*—bicycle, you know?

L. H. U. No, I cannot—[*with a masterly effort*] bike.

S. L. S. [*in amazement*] Do you take no athletic exercise? [*L. H. U. remains disdainfully silent*] Perhaps you like music?

L. H. U. [*coldly*] I like music—good music, of course; but I cannot produce it—if that is what you mean.

S. L. S. [*weary and dumbfounded*] Then what do you do?

L. H. U. [*quietly*] I walk about with dogs!  
[*Terrible pause. They continue to stare at each*

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*other in silence, until the S. L. S., catching sight of a well-known figure, cries eagerly]*  
Oh! there is Mr. Record-Breaker, do introduce me!

L. H. U. [*bewildered*] I—ah—I—

S. L. S. [*impatiently*] Oh! the triple Blue, of course. Surely you know *him*. I thought everybody knew him.

L. H. U. [*with a treacly smile*] Ah! but I am not everybody, I fear.

[*Terrible silence again, while Mr. Record-Breaker, the cynosure of all eyes, in spite of having the appearance of an inmate of a Home for Incurables, waddles ungainly by, and is lost in the crowd.*

[*Meanwhile round the tea-tables a heated crowd fights without quarter for watery ices, lukewarm tea, bread that was once buttered, and sodden strawberries. Young ladies push their way indiscriminately in every direction through this protesting crowd, performing juggling tricks with plates and full teacups.*

AVERAGE UNDERGRAD [*gloomily*] Pretty good rot this, isn't it? Worse than Mrs. Pre's "standers," and they are fairly thin.

SECOND AV. UND. [*cheerily*] Oh! I don't know. You get a much better tea here. If you only come early you can have the pick of the strawberries.

FIRST A. U. [*with sublime scorn*] Tea!

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Why don't they give one claret cup? You might as well feed at an A.B.C.

SECOND A. U. Tea's so much better for the schools, dear boy, you see— [*He is interrupted by an energetic damsel pouring a cup of hot tea down his neck.*] Oh! pray don't apologise; I like it; I really do. So refreshing, you know, in this hot weather; good as a shampoo. [*To his friend, who takes a lugubrious pleasure in mopping him.*] Talking of the schools; that is the beginning of a "gulph," I suppose. Ha! ha!

FIRST A. U. Well, you are lucky to get that, without working for it.

[*He carefully jogs the arm of another young lady by way of an encore.*]

SECOND A. U. [*with gusto*] Great fun this, good as the monkey-house at the Zoo; you can see the Don at Home; like the Zulus, eh? Manners none and customs academic. Ha! ha! Just look at the Dean gobbling ices, and do see old Textbook spooning that female in spectacles. She comes to his lectures. [*Mr. T. obviously makes a bad pun.*] Ah! Naughty! naughty! I can see you!

FIRST A. U. [*with languid hypercriticism*] Not a decent-looking girl in the whole place. Don't you think we might go now, or shall we have a cigarette behind the bushes? [*A bevy of maidens suddenly appears on the balcony, and begins to carol a part-song—very much in*

*parts.]* For goodness sake let us get away ;  
anything — pat-ball, ices, and sudden flirting,  
rather than that squalling.

*[The first A. U. sees a chance of escape, and  
glides towards the distinguished Lady  
President, who is still smiling as her  
guests file past her, unctuously remarking  
—with variations according to taste, sex,  
and academic status—on the charms of  
the afternoon. The scene closes on the  
lady students making short work of the  
débris on the tea slabs.]*

## II

### HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

SCENE - *A Drawing-room in the "Parks System," so ingeniously overcrowded with furniture and knick-knacks as to reduce its slender dimensions to nothing.*

TIME - 7.30 p.m.

OCCASION - *A Dinner Party.*

On the hearthrug the hostess, smiling, but ill at ease (owing to a not unreasonable fear of "cook's temper" and an unfounded idea that something is wrong with her toilette); fluttering about the room the host, trying to conceal his dinner list, and with the air of a comic-opera conspirator. He is, moreover, dubious as to whether he really knows all his guests. The guests meanwhile converse in chilly staccato, and wonder indignantly how much longer they are to be kept waiting. They include a Head of a House and his wife; a Regius Professor "who ought to have been married long ago"; a couple of married Dons and, of course, their wives; a young bachelor Don or two; a pair of young lady students who stand as if they were going to be photographed by the new rays; (they have their best frocks on, and can't forget it, and convey painfully the impression of "having an evening off"); lastly, a solitary, healthy, and very hungry undergraduate, sincerely anxious to be agreeable, but who, so far, has been snubbed by everyone.

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HOST [*nervously to his wife, and fidgeting with his eye-glasses*] My dear, do you think we had better wait any longer for the Harrisons?

[*The guests brighten up, and the conversation has a spasm of brilliance like the new electric light.*]

HOSTESS [*pretending not to hear*] I beg your pardon, dear. [*Frowns secretly at him, and makes cabalistic signs with her fan to show that dinner has not yet been announced; then very blandly*] I think, dear, we had perhaps [*looks for approval to her guests, who smile hungrily*] better wait five minutes more. [*Conversation is shut off with a snap.*] After all, they have some distance to come. [*Lugubrious smiles from those who know that they live in the next road.*] Your watch is surely fast, dear. [*She turns to Head of House with a most bewitching air.*] Excuse me interrupting you. You were saying that it is an infamous measure. Isn't that just a little harsh?

[*She fans herself with deprecatory assent.*]

HOST [*misunderstanding signs of course, hurriedly*] My watch is fast, I think. Only just the half-hour. [*The clock on the mantel-piece strikes quarter to eight with horrible distinctness; whereupon he busies himself with the dinner list.*] Let me see [*to young Don, with the air of imparting a profound secret*] Oh! yes; will you take in Mrs. Quiverfull? Oh! no; I beg your pardon, I mean Miss



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Clio—— You don't know her? Ah! let me introduce you.

*[He is very doubtful as to which of the two young ladies she is, but makes a lucky shot.]*

*[The hired waiter announces Mr. and Mrs. 'Arrison. The guests glare with relief, and the guilty pair enters. Mrs. Harrison sails in with a stereotyped smile; she knows she has an excellent figure. Her husband trots jauntily behind her, bearing no signs of the cab-lecture he has been enduring.]*

MRS. HARRISON. I am so sorry we are so dreadfully late; but those horrid College meetings——

*[The rest of the sentence is blurred in a vague murmur. The guests receive the excuse with sang-froid; Mrs. Harrison has persistently made it for the last five years.]*

*[Dinner is announced, and a modest struggle as to academic precedence begins, chiefly caused by the undergraduate, who thinks that the greatest must come last, and therefore tries to "head off" the Dean and his partner. Yet the struggle in the drawing-room is as nothing to the scramble round the dinner-table.]*

HEALTHY UNDERGRAD *[airily to his partner]*  
Rather good fun this—gives one "ekker" before

dinner. Sort of musical chairs. [*His remarks are received with a chilly smile.*]

HIS PARTNER [*stiffly*] What is "ekker"?

H. U. "Ekker"? 'Pon my word—exercise, you know. [*The lady nods in superior amusement.*] I've always thought it would be jolly decent to play post in the middle of dinner.

[*He stops short as he sees abysses ahead, and wishes the soup would come.*]

HIS PARTNER [*whom this last remark has again frozen up: still more stiffly*] Excuse me, but your chair is on my dress. [*The movement to release it causes an earthquake all along the line.*] Thank you! [*with a tone of suppressed irritation.*]

H. U. [*to himself*] Jolly tight fit. Rather nice-looking girl opposite. Why didn't I take her in?

[*At last they are all seated, and the conversation (save from the undergraduate) is very languid until the champagne goes round. The hostess passes her time in smiling, in eyeing her guests, and in petrifying the servants by mysterious glances. The host is torn between a desire to propitiate the wife of the Head of the College and a very human wish to flirt with the young lady on his left. The other Dons' wives are all busily taking mental notes of their rival's arrangements.*]



## HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

MR. HARRISON [*who unaccountably has found himself next his wife; sotto voce*] Good champagne this. Wonder what the brand is? Must ask Phipps when I get a chance.

HIS WIFE [*who has not yet forgiven him for having kept her waiting; sotto voce*] I would, and be sure to ask the price.

CHEERY YOUNG DON [*to Young Lady Student*] What! not read any novels? How do you manage to live?

Y. L. S. [*calmly*] There are no good English novels now, are there? (No wine, thank you.) I can't read trash.

C. Y. D. [*in airy surprise*] No good novels! There's Anthony Hope and Marie Corelli.

Y. L. S. [*with decision*] Anthony Hope has overwritten himself hopelessly. [*She quite fails to see why the young Don titters over his entrée.*] You don't mean to say you like Marie Corelli? (Yes, water, please, plain water.)

C. Y. D. [*judicially*] But I do. Just the thing before going to bed to take the taste of essays out of your mouth.

Y. L. S. [*judicially*] But she has such a morbid imagination.

[*She leaves her entrée unfinished.*]

C. Y. D. [*emphatically*] I like morbid imaginations. They are not half so enervating as the "New Woman" novel, surely. I like to feel I am a "Mighty Atom." After all, we are only microbes, aren't we?

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Y. L. S. [*putting up her glasses to look at him*] Really? [*The glance quite misses fire.*] I profoundly disagree with you. Such novels are a degradation of the Human Spirit.

C. Y. D. [*still more emphatically*] I like the Human Spirit to be degraded.

[*The Y. L. S. affects to be very much shocked, and turns indignantly to the gentleman on the other side.*] You were talking of lectures. [*Sweetly*] Don't you think it is a shame not to admit women to all lectures?

HER NEIGHBOUR [*quickly*] Is that quite a fair question?

Y. L. S. Now at St. Theresa's they don't admit any women. They tell me it is all owing to that severe Mr. Misogynist. What is worse, his lectures, I believe, are very good.

H. N. [*unhesitatingly*] Very good.

Y. L. S. [*triumphantly*] Then don't you call him horrid?

H. N. [*still more quickly*] Hardly, since it is myself.

[*Y. L. S. collapses, and finishes her dinner in uncomfortable silence. She wishes she had been taken in by the Undergrad, instead of by two Dons.*]

HEALTHY UNDERGRAD [*much animated by dessert*] Well, you see, it was like this. The Proggins—the Proctor, you know—ran me in. I only smashed two windows, and I couldn't very well help it, could I?

## HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

DON'S WIFE [*very much bored*] That depends. [*She has not the least idea about what he is talking.*]

H. U. [*attacking his third apple*] Well, a fiver for two windows is rather steep, don't you think?

D. W. [*doubtfully*] Perhaps it is.

[*She heartily wishes her hostess would collect the ladies, and tries to hint as much by ostentatiously putting on her gloves.*]

HEAD OF COLLEGE [*at the other end of the table; with polished sarcasm*] No doubt you speak of the Boers with especial qualifications.

INGENIOUS YOUNG GENTLEMAN [*with a modest smile*] Oh! not at all. I only happen to have been born at the Cape, and to have just come from there.

[*He cracks a walnut smartly, as if it were his opponent's head.*]

[*The hostess, feeling that a crisis has been reached, huddles her fan and gloves together, collects eyes, and rises. The Healthy Undergrad, still desiring to be affable, bounds up to open the door, and cannons prettily with his host. The two in their confusion proceed to tread on the nearest train with excellent results. A lull follows until the gentlemen join the drawing-room—flown with their own insolence and their host's coffee.*]

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*They collect round the door, looking like a troupe of white minstrels. The ladies slowly and grudgingly break up their circle; a few forbiddingly from behind their fans continue their confidential conversation.*

A DON'S WIFE. I quite agree with you. If Mary had had the ruche altered she might have saved it. As it is, the skirt——

*[The remark ends in a distressingly technical climax.]*

HER CONFIDANTE [*Mary's dress having been destroyed*] By the way, who did you say the young man was?

A D. W. [*from behind her fan*] He's a son of Sir Earthly Cræsus. [Oh, really?] His father is quite impossible, and his mother is [*in a terrible whisper*] dreadful; but the son is charming, considering. An oar, you know, and so obliging; so useful at picnics.

H. C. Ah, you must introduce me. I fancy I have met the father—he is quite impossible.

*[Their hostess flits about, sipping conversation here and there, and presently asks, "Shall we have a little music?" on which all the guests prepare to receive music.]*

HOSTESS. Miss Kitty, won't you sing something.

*[Miss Kitty demurs, but finally warbles Cowen's or Behrend's last ballad.]*

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YOUNG DON'S WIFE [*graciously*] Sweetly pretty, don't you think?

MUSICAL ENTHUSIAST [*grimly*] What—the voice or the music?

Y. D. W. [*doubtfully*] Oh, well, both, of course, you know. [*She smiles in triumph.*]

M. E. [*gloomily*] I can't stand Behrend. It has the effect on me that a toffee drop has on a churchwarden when he finds it in the bag.

[*The M. E., on a bare hint, goes to the piano and plays a rhapsody by Brahms, which at any rate has the effect of galvanising the conversation into new life. He is followed by the Cheerful Young Don, who, instigated by Miss Kitty's bright eyes, sings his famous academic parody of the "Tin Gee-Gee," and the audience, led by the Healthy Undergraduate, find themselves singing the chorus with surprising enthusiasm.*]

HEAD OF COLLEGE [*patronisingly*] Amusing young fellow that. They tell me he got the best first of his year. I can quite believe it. He has a future before him.

HOSTESS [*assenting readily, and feeling very glad she had asked the C. Y. D. as a stop-gap at the last moment.*] Oh, he's bound to get on. [*To herself*] I must get him for the Girls' Friendly Society bazaar. He is just the man to edify the girls.

[*A few minutes later the audience, finding*

*no more comic songs forthcoming, slowly breaks into a saue qui peut. When they are gone the hostess flings herself down on the sofa.*

HOSTESS [*anxiously*] Well, Tom, I hope it went off all right?

TOM [*who is dying for his pipe*] Of course, my dear. [*Groaning*] And now I must write that confounded lecture. [*Dubiously*] I suppose I may smoke here?—the study fire is out.

HOSTESS [*graciously*] Of course, dear. [*She smooths out her dress carefully.*] Well, I'm glad it's over. I've paid for my hospitalities this term, anyway. And it *was* a better dinner than the Harrison's.

TOM [*puffing away, very happy save for the thought of the lecture*] Quite good, quite good!

HOSTESS [*with uxorious futility*] Well, don't be *too* late, dear. [*She rustles away.*



### III

## A CRICKET MATCH

SCENE - *The Christ Church Ground.*

TIME - *About 12.30 p.m.*

OCCASION - *The Match of the Season, "The 'Varsity v. the Australians"; an impeccable, roasting day.*

The ground looks superbly vernal, while from behind the trees the famous semicircle of towers and spires smiles monastically on a brilliant audience. Outside, hansoms and special 'buses deposit fresh loads of Ladies, Dons, and Undergrads, to the critical joy of the loafers; inside the ground, exhausted Undergrads, Dons, and Ladies prowl ceaselessly in search of shade, or gaze jealously at their peers who have succeeded in passing within the mystic circle reserved to members of the Pavilion, and those who can afford a half-crown. Everywhere hoarse and dishevelled boys in caps that were once red sell cards on the principle of free and unrestricted competition.

*[Outside the gates a gang of loafers keeps up a running fire—"This waiy to the cricket match," "'Ere you are, sir; this waiy in," "Laitest scower," &c.]*

LOCAL DOGBERRY *[with dignity]* Sorry, sir; no bicycles admitted at this gate.

*[The bystanders grin with delight.]*

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CASUAL UNDERGRAD. But I can't leave it out here all day. [*The crowd grows indignant at this aspersion of their morality.*] And I haven't a chain.

[*Bystander, sotto voce, "Pore fellow!"*]

L. D. My horders are strict. You can go in without the "bike," or stay 'ere with it. Please yourself, sir.

C. U. [*dryly*] So I intend to. [*Protestingly*] But I see bicycles in there—heaps of them.

L. D. [*superciliously*] Members of the 'ouse, sir. You, sir [*after a disdainful survey of C. U.*] are not a member of the 'ouse.

[*The crowd guffaws in appreciation of the point.*]

C. U. [*changing his tactics and trying to shove a shilling into the hand of the representative of Tyranny*] Look here; it'll be all right. . . .

L. D. [*conscious that the crowd has its eye on him, and expanding his well-padded chest*] Sir! [*with indignation*] I have worn this coat twenty years—— [*The crowd is much moved.*]

C. U. [*profanely*] Then, for God's sake, take it off now!

[*The crowd roars with delight, and L. D. turns purple. C. U. retires, however, amidst the applause of a moral victory.*]

Inside the ground, FIRST AVERAGE UNDERGRAD [*surveying the scene*] Not a pew to be had anywhere. [*Crossly*] I knew we should



## A CRICKET MATCH

be late, because you wouldn't cut that confounded lecture.

SECOND A. U. [*serenely*] Don't fret yourself. Virtue gets its reward, as you shall see. [*Seriously*] Pick out the nicest girl you can spot, and with the largest parasol, and then snuggle in beside her. I always do it in the Parks, and you get a better selection when there's a "gate."

[*First A. U., mollified, strolls leisurely with his companion round the ground on this new judgment of Paris.*]

FIRST A. U. [*presently*] What do you say to the red parasol—there?

SECOND A. U. [*confidently*] The green and white is larger.

FIRST A. U. [*crushingly*] But the red is better-looking, and has a match-card. Besides, [*lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper*] I like the look of the clocks on——

[*The rest of the sentence is lost, but it apparently wins the day.*]

FIRST A. U. [*the strategic blockade being effected*] Close in a bit, and see if you can read her match-card:

[*Second A. U. tries, but the damsel artlessly lets drop her parasol at the critical moment, and jags his cheek badly.*]

DAMSEL [*very coolly*] I am sorry. But if you like I will give you twopence to buy a card.

[*Complete collapse of the two A. U.*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

A RED-CAPPED BOY [*marking his prey*] Correct card o' match. Order of goin' in, and order of goin' out. Don't you buy one off 'im, sir, he's a poachin' on my beat.

SECOND BOY [*displaying wares*] Hall the Haustrialian Beauties! Photograrphs of the Haustrialians! Dirt cheap, sir. Only a tanner. Throw you in a photograrph of Mr. Lev-es-on Gow-er. Mr. Loois reduced to 'alf price. See, sir! Mr. Loois a-caught in the hact of makin' a run. Seein's believin', sir.

[*The tempted purchasers move on.*]

FIRST BOY [*in very audible tones*] Ugh! Calls 'isself a 'Varsity gent, 'e do—a bloomin' townee in flannels, that's wot I call 'im.

FIRST DON [*meeting brother Don*] Hullo! You here! Before lunch, too! You might be a Professor!

SECOND DON [*fervently*] Heaven forbid! Is thy servant a dog? But I have the professorial complaint. I am suffering from overwork. And so—— [*waves his hand gracefully towards the field.*] But I thought you lectured to-day at twelve?

FIRST DON [*complacently*] So I do normally. But, to quote my notice, I regret that I was unavoidably prevented from lecturing this morning.

SECOND DON [*smiling*] Curious how great minds think alike. My pupil wrote me the same explanation about his non-appearance,

## A CRICKET MATCH

and I have just passed him working out the relations between mind and matter in Giffen's bowling. But where are you off to now?

FIRST DON [*nonchalantly*] Oh! I'm merely going into the enclosure to pay my respects to Mrs. Circe. I observe that, like Catherine de Medici, she has her "Flying Squadron" with her, and I want to inspect her latest attractive recruit. She combines, you know, compulsory conscription with the advantages of the voluntary system.

SECOND DON. *Fiat experimentum!* Let me know the results. So far the girls she has had up this term have been very uninteresting, mainly the pink-and-white tailor-made type from Kensington, or else——

FIRST DON [*thoughtfully*] Yes, I fear Mrs. Circe is getting into the *passée* stage. When they begin to indulge in *risqué* society of the serious class, it means that the penitential period is not far off. The last time I dined there I was Martyr-memorialled on the wrongs of the sex by a female——

SECOND DON [*nodding*] I know—whose logic and clothes were more eloquent than her words, as to what the brutal politeness of man will allow suffering womanhood to endure without a protest. Well, better luck to you this time. [*They part in different directions.*]

SWEETMEAT SELLER [*selecting an appropriate group—i.e. where a very modest "Fresher"*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*has plumped down into a covey of young lady students from Lady Godiva Hall, and is sitting in melancholy discomfort listening to their learned prattle, and is too shy to move]* Torfy and acid drawps! Acid drawps and torfy! One penny the packet. [*With the suggestiveness of the Serpent addressing Eve*] Box o' sweets for your young lydy, sir? [*The "Fresher" blushes a healthy tomato-red, and the Y. L. S. titter academically.*] 'Ave pity on a poor man wot earns 'is livin' by the sweat of 'is brow, sir, and buy a box o' sweets for your young lydy!

F. [*feebly*] Please go away! I don't want your sweets.

S. S. [*gently*] I wasn't sayin' as you did, but your young lydy——

F. [*even a smug F. will turn sometimes*] Get off!

S. S. [*in a stage aside*] Wants to be left alone, 'e do. [*Politely*] I won't disturb you no longer, sir, as I see you wants to be alone.

[*S. S. shambles off chuckling. Y. L. S. form a guard of impenetrable parasols, and the "Fresher" mops his face and relieves his feelings by clapping a bad "pull" loudly.*]

ENTHUSIASTIC AND VERY PRETTY VISITOR.  
You can't think, Tom, what a job I had to get mother to come up for the match. It's far more interesting than the Eights. Training

## A CRICKET MATCH

makes men so much more men, and, therefore, so much more stupid—doesn't it?

DEVOTED MALE COUSIN [*who is a rowing Blue, dubiously*] Do you think so, really?

[*Tries to look gallantly at his cousin, whose interest is wholly concentrated on the field.*]

E. P. V. [*over her shoulder*] Don't you? Oh, I forgot, you row, I think [*and this when he had been the mainstay of a famous Oxford crew! Et tu, Neæra!*] Oh, how pretty—right through the slips. [*Claps enthusiastically.*] Do tell me who is that muff at third man, and who is that bowling? Is it Jones?

D. M. C. [*sulkily*] I'm sure I don't know. I have never seen him before, and I don't want to see him again. [*He knew quite well, of course, but oarsmen are stupid.*]

E. P. V. [*impatiently*] Can't you ask someone? [*Severely, as a slashing stroke is made*] Serves him right—a very loose ball. No [*excited*] he hasn't saved it—another boundary. Can't you ask that young man there?

D. M. C. [*still sulky*] He is only another stupid oarsman. He won't know.

E. P. V. [*coaxingly*] Don't be silly, Tom. Find out who is bowling [*smiling enchantingly*] and I will come out with you this afternoon in your canoe, and give up the match for once.

D. M. C. [*humbly grateful*] Oh, Lotty!



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

That's ripping! Look here; I see Legguards over there, and he'll know.

[*Proceeds to fetch him, and then remembers, too late, that he had once before introduced Mr. Legguards, with fatal effects.*]

[*An arid technical discussion ensues, in which Mr. L. scores heavily, and the D. M. C. is left very much in the long field. It ends in Mr. L. carrying off the E. P. V. into the enclosure.*]

D. M. C. [*two hours later finding them still together*] I say, Lotty, aren't you coming on the Cher?

E. P. V. [*smiling sweetly*] Oh, not to-day, Tom. You can't expect me to come away now, just as the bowling is being collared.

D. M. C. [*gloomily*] The bowling, it strikes me, is not the only thing that has been collared.

E. P. V. [*hurriedly*] Be reasonable, Tom. [*In a low voice*] I can't be so rude as to give up the seat that Mr. Legguards has so kindly got for me in the enclosure. Take mamma on the river instead—she adores the river and sailors [*D. M. C.'s face is a study*] and I—well, I frankly don't when there's the chance of squalls.

[*D. M. C. retires sorrowfully, his heart fiercely vibrating with aphorisms on the female sex.*]

MR. L. [*admiringly*] You fairly yorked him that time [*watching D. M. C.'s retreating figure*] clean out of the ground, eh?

## A CRICKET MATCH

E. P. V. [*reflectively*] Poor Tom! He has no idea how to play a losing game—if he's once hit he gets wild, and——

MR. L. [*cunningly*] I should say that he was always pretty hard hit where you——

E. P. V. [*coolly*] And then he has no defence.

MR. L. [*smiling*] Particularly against those who break in on their engagements.

[*The conversation again becomes technical and confidential.*]

FIRST SLEEK YOUNG CURATE [*meeting brother ditto*] Why, who would have thought of seeing you here? [*With affected severity*] What have you done with your sheep? Does your Rector know you are out?

SECOND S. Y. C. [*gravely*] Those who wear black coats shouldn't preach sermons. A selection from my flock is on the ground—somewhere, mostly members of the rural cricket team enjoying the annual outing of the parish choir. I am up here for the Cuddesdon festival, which perhaps you may remember is on to-day.

FIRST S. Y. C. [*grinning*] Naturally, since I came up for it. But I unfortunately missed my train, and——

SECOND S. Y. C. [*appreciatively*] Like myself; and as I couldn't afford to drive I came here——

FIRST S. Y. C. To see the dear old Warden. My case to a T. [*Enthusiastically*] 'Varsity

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

doing very nicely, aren't they? Jimmy is as good as ever. Those drives of his——

*[The conversation becomes very unclerical as they stroll away.]*

*[If you pass through the tent you can hear every topic discussed, and would hardly think you were at a cricket match, e.g.—]*

FIRST YOUNG LADY *[confidentially]* Of course, they have hushed it up; but I will say, though she is a friend of mine, that she treated him disgracefully. Such a nice boy, too.

SECOND Y. L. *[cheerfully]* Oh dear no! Not half the price. You can get it for 3¼d the yard at Elliston and Cavell's, and it looks as good as new——

A MALE VOICE *[discontentedly]* Yes, a beastly shame. It's all favouritism; if you don't come from a big public school and aren't a member of Vincent's you might bat like the Archangel Michael, and they wouldn't give you a look in——

ANOTHER MALE VOICE. Confound that girl! They oughtn't to allow parasols and hats like that in the front row when they practically sit with their backs to the match——

ANOTHER MALE VOICE. Pipped him, by gad! Plum into the sticks——another blob to spoil his average. I should think he would get the boot after this——and high time too.

MRS. CIRCE *[surrounded by her court, three irreproachable young ladies, a Bachelor Head of*



## A CRICKET MATCH

*a House, a Bullingdon Peer's son, and a would-be Newdigate Prizeman*] Ah, Mr. Crichton, [*reproachfully*] I thought, like my husband, you never came to cricket matches! But I see you have the last infirmity of academic minds, like all of us.

MR. C. [*deprecatingly*] I didn't come to see the cricket, but to see the spectators.

MRS. C. [*severely*] To pay an *al fresco* call, in other words. Well, it is high time; you haven't been to see me for ever so long. Oh, no, don't tell me you have been busy. I know that——

MR. C. [*calmly*] Absence, you know——

MRS. C. [*wagging a finger*] We don't allow quotations or personal remarks. We scone the offenders by making them stay here and be bored.

MR. C. But may not one stay without doing either? I was wondering [*carelessly*] whether I could get a chair.

[*Mrs. C., who had been on the point of introducing him to "a very nice girl," thinks better of it, and takes his hint. She sends the Bachelor Head of House away with "the nice girl" to get ices and Mr. C. promptly appropriates the vacant seat. This manoeuvre is not lost on Mr. C.'s friends.*]

FIRST LADY FRIEND [*in the back row, plaintively*] It's getting positively scandalous.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

Her husband ought to know of it. He has to slave instead in the Museum to pay for her dresses and extravagance, and——

SECOND L. F. [*pleasantly*] Her husband, poor man! He only cares for things that you can vivisect and hurt, and then examine under the microscope.

FIRST L. F. [*pleasantly also*] That accounts for it. Mabel's feelings can't be hurt, and her conduct won't stand a microscopic examination.

FIRST DAUGHTER OF A DON [*as a gentleman bows in passing*] Oh, yes! Of course, you've only to be kind to him. He dances atrociously, but he is a double Blue, and so everyone coddles him. I coddle him too, because he takes me into the Pavilion then for nothing.

SECOND D. OF A D. [*who likes to be called a "Home Student"*] Even Blues have a rational place in the University. [*Reflectively*] It is a pity, though, that they can't flirt better. Some day there will be "Blues" given for flirting, I suppose——

FIRST D. OF A D. [*laughing*] And then the women will have a chance. [*Suddenly*] We want someone to give us tea. I have a thirst I wouldn't exchange for a frock by Doucet.

SECOND D. OF A D. And I am as dry as Mr. Textbook's lectures! [*Regretfully*] But we can't give up our seats; we should never get them again, these Oxford women [*with a shrug of the shoulders*] are so greedy——

## A CRICKET MATCH

FIRST D. OF A D. [*decisively*] And besides, we can be seen so nicely in the front row here. Clearly tea must be brought us. Ah! [*with a cultured smile*] Mr. Farniente, isn't it hot?

MR. F. [*who is in a wonderful white drill hat and Japanese umbrella, which throws a rainbow of crude colour on his pallid face*] Would you have it cold? [*Smiles incomparably.*]

SECOND D. OF A D. [*smartly*] How is the ego, Mr. Farniente? The last time I saw you you were cultivating it assiduously; or can't egos grow in a drought? I should think it was very uncomfortable to have a warm soul.

MR. F. [*still smiling*] You speak with the fervour of personal experience, but I assure you——

FIRST D. OF A D. [*striking in irrelevantly*] What a lot of water the batsmen seem to require! [*With a delicate glance at the tea tent*] Why don't they give them cold tea? It is so much more refreshing.

MR. F. [*who refuses to see the point*] Yes, it makes one thirsty to see them, doesn't it? One has to remove oneself from the temptations excited by the--non-ego. Good afternoon!

[*He raises his hat, and makes slowly for the tea tent with obvious reluctance.*]

FIRST D. OF A D. [*bitterly*] Well, don't tell me men are not selfish.

SECOND D. OF A D. [*impotently*] Particularly when they cultivate their non-ego.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

NEWSPAPER BOY [*stationed at the gates and attacking those leaving when stumps have been drawn for the day*] Oxford Reeviauw! Speshal Oxford Reeviauw! Laitest scores of the Australian match.

[*His voice increases in indignation as the spectators unnaturally refuse to buy.*]

CASUAL UNDERGRAD [*escorting fair cousin home*] Here, boy! Review, please. [*Aside*] I may as well know what has been happening at the match. You cannot be in heaven and on earth at the same time.

#### IV

### AN AUTO-DA-FE

SCENE - "*The Schools*" on "*Black Monday*"  
(i.e., the first day of the great  
examination for the Honour Schools).

TIME - *About 9.20 a.m.*

The large entrance hall is crammed with a restless horde of undergraduates in "academic costume" and the regulation black coat and white tie, looking very much like a large flock of sheep carefully penned outside a butcher's shop. Amongst this masculine crowd of aspirants may be detected with difficulty a tiny sprinkling of would-be feminine martyrs. They are gathered mainly in shy groups, according to their tribal Halls, and their hats form an unholy anachronism dotted about the black mortar-boards; otherwise their toilettes are an ingenious set of variations, from the extreme "sloppy" to the ultra-fashionable. The Clerk of the Schools pushes his way consequentially backwards and forwards through the serried masses—for is this not his day?—and rings electric bells nervously for want of something to do. Outside in "the High" an overflow meeting is being held, consisting chiefly of those who wish to finish the morning cigarette, vividly conscious that tobacco smoked in violation of Proctorial rules is doubly sweet.

FAIR-HAIRED ATHLETE [*"barging" jocularly into a friend*] G'morning, Mopsy! Didn't know you ran to this show!

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

SECOND F.-H. A. [*lighting a cigarette with a grin*] I didn't run, you Juggins ; I walked. Catch me running !

FIRST F.-H. A. [*poking him violently in the ribs*] Oh, you funny beetle ! I'd put that down on paper if I were you ; it oughtn't to be lost. But what's your line ? [*Waggishly*] Greats, of course ?

SECOND F.-H. A. [*with athletic emphasis*] Greats be —— ! Theol.—my boy—Theol.—Peter and Paul, and all that lot. That's the ticket. It's a jolly side easier to nab a Fourth than to get through those confounded Groups. You've only to gas on morality——

FIRST F.-H. A. [*calmly*] Yes, and what's better, it gives you a tremendous leg-up for the Bishop's exam. later. But you're only going for a Fourth, I suppose ?

SECOND F.-H. A. [*with bland indignation*] What do you take me for, a beastly scholar—that——

FIRST F.-H. A. [*eagerly*] Right ! Let's agree to chuck it at 11.30. We can play pills then till lunch, you know.

SECOND F.-H. A. Just the thing ! I'll chuck it at 11.30 if it hasn't chucked me before then. [*With the satisfied air of an athlete perpetrating a joke*] It is better to play pills than to be pillled, eh ?

[*Meanwhile in various parts of the crowd desperate efforts are being made to cram tips at the last moment.*]



## AN AUTO-DA-FE

CHEERY SCHOLAR [*anxiously*] I say, did Aristotle say mind and matter were the same, or was it Hume?

SECOND C. S. [*airily*] Oh, ask another. Aristotle for choice. It doesn't really matter a twopenny curse. My tutor says all you have got to do is to be consistent. Try Herbert Spencer when in doubt—call him a Materialist with a big "M," and hint at Evolution and Kant all through, only don't commit yourself. Philosophy up here is all allusion as well as illusion. That's the best of it. You can always hedge with these philosophical Johnnies.

C. S. [*with a metaphysical air*] I shall toss—heads Aristotle, tails H. S. [*He tosses accordingly.*] Tails it is. Then I go for Herbert Spencer.

SECOND C. S. [*consolingly*] You're quite safe. In Oxford you can always play to the examiners by driving a coach and eight through these uneducated men of science.

A WOE-BEGONE THEOLOGIAN [*desperately*] Confound it all! I got up all those heresies at breakfast, and excommunicate me if I haven't forgotten them. I knew them pat, too. Let me see: [*counting on his fingers*] Arianism, yes!—Nestorianism, yes!—Euty-chianism—[*pitifully*—what in the name of sin was Euty-chianism?

BROTHER THEOLOGIAN [*whose memory is vaguely stirred*] Oh, wasn't that the creed of

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

those chaps who said you ought always to go to sleep in church, and then one of them fell down, you know, from the upper story, and——

W.-B. T. [*jocularly*] Lived happily ever afterwards? You've got a bit mixed, I fancy. [*Struck by a brilliant idea*] We'll ask old Smugson, he's sure to know—he's the safest "first" in.

[*They wedge their way to Smugson—a haggard, unkempt youth, with the hair of a distinguished pianist and the air of having swallowed, and failed to digest, a very diminutive chin. He obligingly supplies a lucid historical explanation of the heresy from its origin to the present day.*]

W.-B. T. [*to whom it sounds strangely unfamiliar*] Thanks—thanks! [*Dubiously*] But are you quite sure?

SMUGSON [*dryly*] Quite. You will find that is the view the examiners will take.

W.-B. T. [*as the pair retire, but quite loud enough to be heard*] Then all I can say is, some examiners are blasted fools.

A CRITICAL CANDIDATE [*surveying the scene*] Did you ever see such a collection of frumps as the women? I can't think where they are produced. I hope they will all be ploughed.

SECOND C. C. [*gloomily*] No chance of that. But [*with a flicker of interest*] who is the good-looking one over there by the pillar?



## AN AUTO-DA-FE

FIRST C. C. [*indifferently*] Oh, that's the Amateur Psyche. She would be good-looking if she weren't so haughty, and all because she takes her face so seriously.

SECOND C. C. [*with a tinge of jealousy*] She doesn't seem to be very haughty with Lothair—what do you think?

[*While they have been talking the young lady in question has entered into a smiling conversation with a good-looking undergrad, to the great joy of the bored of both sexes, who watch this delicate flirtation on the rim of a volcano with undisguised interest.*]

FIRST C. C. [*loftily*] Lothair is incorrigible. I never saw such a fellow for the ladies. He is always tying himself to someone's apron strings.

SECOND C. C. [*more jealously*] But I really can't understand a girl flirting here, when her head is chock full of note-books marked in red ink.

FIRST C. C. [*with the superiority born of an unrivalled knowledge of the sex*] There is nothing singular in that, my dear fellow. [*With divine condescension*] There are women who, if they were early martyrs tied up to the posts in the Coliseum, and were expecting the lions every minute, would flirt with the occupant of the next post if he happened to be a man

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

SECOND C. C. [*losing his interest as Lothair gets more and more involved*] I daresay. Do you notice, though, how the other girls are all shoving up so as to be first in the room? They mean to have their full three hours' worth. And you bet they are all cramming to the last.

[*This is really an unnecessary libel. The conversation in the little feminine clusters round the pillars consists mainly of comments on the men, or the following.*]

FIRST YOUNG LADY STUDENT [*anxiously*] I say, Dot, shall you take off your hat in the exam. room?

SECOND Y. L. S. [*smiling*] Of course. You don't suppose I'm going to write for three mortal hours in my hat, even to charm Professor Misogynist. We aren't going to church.

FIRST Y. L. S. [*still more anxiously*] But how will you put it on again?

SECOND Y. L. S. [*briskly*] On my head, you goose.

FIRST Y. L. S. [*mournfully*] I can't take mine off; my hair would come down. I was so late this morning that I had only time to twist it up anyhow—and if——[*suddenly*] Does it look *very* untidy?

SECOND Y. L. S. [*critically*] It's a bit bunchy, but it'll last out, I think, if you are careful. [*Maliciously*] I wouldn't nod to anyone, though, not even to——[*the rest in a laughing whisper*].

## AN AUTO-DA-FE

[Outside in "the High" a small knot in the overflow meeting is earnestly discussing various methods, not officially recognised by the University as legal ways of circumventing the Inquisitors.]

AN INVETERATE IDLER [*with effusiveness*] Pooh! Teach your grandmamma, old chap! Shirt cuffs won't work, dear boy; they were played out long ago. I'll tell you something much smarter. I knew a girl——

[*This announcement is received by the group of brother Inveterate Idlers with profane laughter.*]

I. I. [*unabashed*] And she had a bracelet [*much renewed laughter and a sotto voce comment, "Did you give it her?"*] and she stuck her notes in her bracelet—see?——

[*The remainder of the story is cut short by the sudden appearance of two Pro-Proctors, who proceed to "haul" the group for smoking in cap and gown.*]

FIRST P.-P. [*addressing one of the knot, who is picturesquely attired in pink silk socks, a blue and white spotted shirt, glossy pumps, and a very Oriental kummerbund*] I suppose you are aware that—er—slippers are not a part of academical costume? If you come in them again you will be turned back. [*With Proctorial severity*] It may be hot, but that is no reason why you should appear dressed in a sash like a woman. As you are] only

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

a man, you are expected to dress like a man.

[*This draws a feeble chuckle from the party. "Names and colleges" having been taken, the Pro-Proctorial Twin-Brethren disappear.*]

SECOND P.-P. [*as they depart*] A rare battue, that! Excellent for the University chest.

FIRST P.-P. [*grimly*] Quite. Driving grouse is nothing to it.

[*At this point the electric bells in the hall begin to ring vociferously, and a strident voice continues to shout with monotonous dissonance, "School of Modern History —up."* The History victims at once —struggle with violent reluctance through the crowd towards the indicated staircase. Lothair, who is a Greats man, is pathetically abandoned by his Enchantress, but is rewarded with a Francisca-da-Rimini lingering glance from over her shoulder as she is swept in the seething human current towards "The North School!" A minute later, and the bells for the other Schools sound in sharp succession. By 9.35 the great hall is empty save for an occasional belated undergrad hurrying like the White Rabbit to the appointed rendezvous.

[*Upstairs in the Great Examination Room,*

## AN AUTO-DA-FE

*which, with its numerous little tables à part, has the air of a Garden Restaurant on the Continent, some 200 undergrads ultimately find seats. The ladies occupy a small Gynæceum of two rows at the furthest end, where they can see but cannot be seen. The stifling silence is only broken by the scratching of quills and then by an Examiner's announcement.*

THE SENIOR EXAMINER [after duly conferring with his colleagues he comes forward, and with careful negligence posts himself in front of the aforesaid Gynæceum. Hence his winged words will reach it first.] Owing to the excessive heat—er—candidates may remove their gowns [profound sensation] and write with them off!!

[A faint titter ripples through the men's tables, but receives no response from the Gynæceum. In fact, ten minutes elapse before the excitement in that quarter abates. Subsequent reflection, aided by the chaff of his colleagues, convinces the senior examiner that he has unconsciously added a beautiful specimen to the list of "things which we would wish to express differently."

V

# VANITY FAIR

SCENE - *A semi-academic Bazaar, held in The Hall of All Work belonging to the Bardolph Hotel, to relieve the 'intolerable strain' on the finances of The Society of the Ancient Order of Gossips (Oxford Branch).*

The Bazaar is to be opened by the beautiful and popular wife of a very unpopular M.P., and is under the coerced patronage of all the Powers, academic, municipal, and county. This fact has drawn a large crowd of sightseers, composed mainly of ladies, maid-servants, and shop-girls, and a few undergrads, anxious to witness, without paying, the arrival of the gracious Personage who is to open it.

FIRST DON'S WIFE [*who with her faithful confidante has at last fought her way into the front rank*] How dreadfully rude all these women are! They positively have no manners! I simply ache with their shoving.

SECOND DITTO [*slightly breathless from her efforts*] Yes, indeed! the lower classes have sadly deteriorated since I was a girl. [*In a tone of gratified cheerfulness*] But we shall see beautifully now. [*Dropping her voice*]



## VANITY FAIR

And *she* is not really English after all—you surprise me!

FIRST D. W. [*emphatically*] English? oh, dear, no! She is quite a mongrel—a foreign Countess in her own right, though she speaks English as well as you do.

SECOND D. W. [*slightly nettled*] Really? And is she as pretty as all the men say?

FIRST D. W. [*oracularly*] Too pretty—[*with malice aforethought*—I was told by a friend of mine who knows somebody who knows her well that—

*[Her voice sinks, and the rest of the sentence is conveyed in a magnificently feminine aposiopesis.]*

SECOND D. W. [*nodding sympathetically*] Quite so—still——[*breaking off*] Oh! do you see your parlour-maid Betty there?

FIRST D. W. [*indignantly, but not daring to catch Betty's eye*] What a sly minx! Out of the house as soon as one's back is turned! [*Pathetically*] But I can't take any notice, can I? And she is so handy otherwise.

SECOND D. W. [*promptly*] Of course not. It would never do. Yet it is remarkable how curious these half-educated girls are.

*[A movement in the closely-packed mob indicates that the crisis is at hand. To the astonished amusement of the crowd, "the Countess in her own right" arrives, not in a carriage and pair, but on a*



*bicycle, and dressed in a very rational if very chic toilette. Having finally persuaded the incredulous policeman of her identity, she succeeds in entering the hall amidst the angry silence of the ladies, the bewilderment of the maid-servants, and the rapt cheering of the undergrads.*

[*An hour later within the Hall the usual scene is being enacted—a judicious compound of a modern and very correct edition of Bunyan's "Vanity Fair" and the dénouement to the History of the Tower of Babel. Stalls to the right, stalls to the left, stalls in front, challenge wary and unwary alike. The fair stallholders are the incarnation of "the economic woman" when stimulated by the principle of godless and unlimited competition. Everywhere young ladies with flushed faces and jealous glances roam about offering impossible raffles at impossible prices. Tamed undergrads in gaudy rosettes and buttonholes hawk programmes and act as decoy-ducks to their as yet untamed kith and kin. A few young and Pharisaic Lady Students stroll superciliously about, thanking Heaven that they are not as these their poor unemancipated sisters. In addition, there is the usual pot-pourri of loafers, male and female, academic and non-*

## VANITY FAIR

*academic; the din of conversation more than usually silly, the perpetual rattle of money-boxes, and the pathetic cries of animals—dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, etc.—clamouring to be sold.*

EXCITED PUPIL [*in a crude purple and yellow favour, pouncing with avidity on his tutor*] Come, come, sir; you aren't here to be idle. You must buy—and buy from me.

HIS TUTOR [*with evasive pathos*] But I am only here on false pretences. I came to visit a friend staying at the Bardolph, and before I was aware of it I was fined half-a-crown and turned into this Purgatory.

E. P. [*gleefully*] You can't get out of Purgatory without buying an Indulgence. I'll let you off cheap. Here's a nice bed quilt, in forty-eight primitive colours, worked by the fair hands of forty-eight different young ladies—just the thing for a bachelor who has no home comforts.

H. T. [*shuddering*] The very look of the quilt makes me shiver—really I——

E. P. [*with cheerful severity*] Do you think so? To my mind the very colours are enough to make one's blood boil—[*displaying the article*—I assure you it's not so bad when seen in the gloom of a college “bedder”—[*adding with loving insistence*—and think, too, of the forty-eight different young ladies—surely——

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

H. T. [*desperately*] All right—all right. How much? [*The "bargain" is then struck.*] But may I know [*cuttingly*] what form of philanthropy I am supporting?

E. P. [*frankly*] To tell you the truth, I haven't an idea. I have never thought of asking.

H. T. [*with the bitterness of a cheated man*] From the look of the place I should say it was a Society for Providing Work for Unemployed and Temporarily Motherless Undergraduates, and Husbands for——

E. P. [*laughing*] Perhaps it is. What does it matter? [*The Tutor turns to make his escape, but his Pupil slyly draws him aside to whisper*] You won't mind my asking you, but perhaps you will excuse my not bringing an essay to you to-night. You see [*with a wave of his hand at Vanity Fair*]*—well, duty first and pleasure afterwards.*

H. T. [*trying to conceal his joy*] Well, I suppose I must excuse you, though it is most irregular.

[*The Tutor is then allowed to flee, which he does as speedily as the weight of the forty-eight young ladies' quilt will allow.*]

UNDERGRADUATE VISITOR [*to fair cousin, who is pestering him*] It's no use trying it on with me, Flo; it won't wash. I'm dead broke, and haven't a stiver to be rushed out of. Look at my pockets! [*Pointing to the empty lining hanging down on either side.*]

## VANITY FAIR

FAIR COUSIN [*more in sorrow than anger*]  
But, Ted, what's the use of a cousin if——

U. V. [*briskly*] I tell you what, though. I have brought Lord Consols with me as a substitute, and you can pluck him to your heart's content. We call him Danae, you know, because he's always to be seen in a shower of gold. [*Almost apologetically*] He's not an Adonis, of course, and he's got a complexion like brown boots that have never been polished; but he's a real green-grass Viscount, fair, fat, and twenty, and if you play the game properly he will coo charmingly while you rook him. [*In a whisper*] Stroke him down first—you know how—and he will slobber over the hand that robs him.

[*Lord Consols is promptly brought up and introduced. His bilious but genial visage dimples into innumerable creases, which do duty for a smile in response to the maidenly sweet reception which is demurely offered him.*]

U. V. [*to an equally bankrupt friend, as he watches the process of plucking*] Hear him chirp! Lord, isn't it idyllic? But it won't do him any harm. [*With genuine admiration*] After all, Flo is the most charming little parasite in the whole social organism.

A VOLUBLE PROGRAMME-SELLER [*tackling the austere wife of a Head of a House with her daughter in tow*] What! going, Madam! Impossible! This way to the entertainments.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

You can't miss them. Performance just about to commence !

[*The austere matron tries to brush past him with a majestic rustle of silken skirts.*]

V. P. S. [*with augmented volubility*] You positively must take tickets — see the programme — a refined entertainment specially designed for the home circle. Skirt dancing by a professor's niece, and patronised by the Vice-Chancellor and all the local clergy ; living pictures and tableaux-vivants by Dons' wives ; an undergraduate beauty show, to be decided by the audience ; the hearts of M.A.s as seen by the Röntgen rays ; to conclude with caricatures on all the leading University lights by an undergrad who has been twice sent down. You can't resist that——

THE DAUGHTER-IN-TOW [*interrupting*] How funny ! [*With a daughter's enthusiasm*] Oh, we must see papa caricatured.

V. P. S. [*emphatically*] Of course you must. It's screamingly comic, and the best thing in the show. I will let you in half-price as you are relations. [*The mother's face almost becomes a caricature on the spot.*] Only don't [*this very quietly to the daughter*] say it was I who did it.

AUSTERE MOTHER [*with gruff feebleness*] I haven't any money.

[*A fierce glance at her daughter is intended to convey an obvious hint.*]



## VANITY FAIR

D. I. T. [*with bashful provokingness*] Oh, mother, how can you? You know you have. Anyway, [*feeling for her purse*] I have a sovereign left. [*Smiling at her mother, but really at the V. P. S.*] You can't let me go in alone, mother. [*This last is rammed home with a finished suggestiveness.*

[*The Austere Mother, after a maternal view of the situation, silently acquiesces in this conclusion.*

V. P. S. [*bowing*] A highly proper decision, if I may say so. [*His tone changes suddenly*] Very sorry, but we give no change. It's a pity you haven't a shilling, for the seats are only sixpence apiece.

[*He then proceeds to add insult to injury by bustling them into the entertainment-room, and carefully arranging that mother and daughter should sit well apart.*

YOUNG LADY [*who presides over the Flower and Refreshment Stall with what she conceives to be the appropriate air of saucy coquetry*] So you have come to button-hole me again.

FORLORN ADMIRER [*quietly*] Oh! no; to be button-holed.

[*Takes a seat by the counter and waits.*

Y. L. [*petulantly*] But I haven't any button-holes left.

F. A. [*with melancholy reproachfulness*] You found one for Jerry five minutes ago.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

Y. L. [*tossing her head, and busying herself among the cups and saucers*] Oh, that! [*with a daring glance*] that was the one you insisted on giving me this morning. It was the only thing in flowers I had, and as he offered me—half a couter, I think you call it—in the sacred cause of charity, of course he had to have it.

[*Despite the defiant tone of this explanation, she awaits his answer rather nervously.*]

F. A. [*very promptly*] Then in the sacred cause of charity you can equally well give me at the same price the rose you are wearing.

Y. L. [*flatly*] Indeed I can't. [*Leaning half-repentantly over the counter*] I daren't—mother gave it me—and she would miss it, though I [*carelessly*] wouldn't.

F. A. [*also leaning over the counter*] But in the sacred cause of charity. [*Pleadingly*] She will never notice; she is far too busy swindling—I mean letting things go dirt cheap. Besides, you can say—

Y. L. [*with a naughty nod of her fuzzy front curls*] It was thrown away—I see. [*She takes the rose from her breast and surveys it tantalisingly.*] What are you going to bid?

F. A. [*stirred, as he should be, by this charmingly pensive spectacle*] Oh, I'll help you behind the counter to wash up.

Y. L. [*much alarmed*] Indeed you won't.  
[*She proceeds hurriedly to throw up fortifications of dirty plates and dishes.*]



## VANITY FAIR

F. A. [*with fervour*] Then I'll eat anything you like, provided it's not too messy; [*surveying the "disjecta fragmenta" that are left*] shall we say the remainder of the lobster salad, with those stale muffins thrown in?

Y. L. [*mischievously*] You must have an ice, too, to cool you; there's watery lemon and very crushed strawberry.

A SISTER-SELLER [*coming up and interrupting unceremoniously*] How are you getting on, Miss Lighthead? May I sit a bit with you? I haven't been off my feet for six hours, and I am ready to drop. Thanks! [*As she calmly appropriates a chair, without further waiting.*

[*The Forlorn Admirer, who has already polished off the muffins, is ultimately compelled to retire, in order to digest them and his wrath without violating the rules of politeness.*

[*As the afternoon draws to an end the crowd perceptibly diminishes. Lord Consols, however, can be seen in the centre of the room completely plucked.*

LORD CONSOLS [*despairingly*] What on earth am I to do? Here I am with a child's woollen petticoat, a feeding-bottle, a parasol, an armful of smelling toys, and a bottle of Mother Seigel's Syrup! A nice situation for a hereditary legislator!

HIS UNDERGRAD MEPHISTOPHELES [*soothingly*] I tell you what, give 'em to Mrs.

Quiverful; she'll be eternally grateful, and will ask you in return to high tea and slops with the family any and every day in the week. [*Graciously*] Come along, I'll introduce you.

LORD CONSOLS [*thoroughly frightened*] No, thanks. [*With the shudder of a featherless bird*] I've had quite enough of introductions for one afternoon.

[*Despite the repeated offer, he takes to flight, acquisitions and all (these latter ultimately go to swell the perquisites of a pampered scout); and the curtain falls on a Cheap-Jack auction, the details of which are scarcely fit for publication.*]

## VI

### A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

SCENE - *The well-known premises of the Union Society on a Thursday night, when there is to be a star debate on the abolition of the chaperone.*

TIME - *About 7.20 p.m.*

Members are already beginning to straggle in and loiter about the lobby or endeavour to get near the telegram board and read the fragmentary despatches on every conceivable subject, from the latest breach of promise case to the most recent movements of the German Emperor. The vast majority are undergrads (relieved by a young Don or two), and are pure loafers. A small proportion, however, are obviously intensely political, with the cares of the Empire written on their faces, and these form animated groups, where the fortunes of undergrad politicians and parties are made and destroyed, and the inner light of a fierce political life burns feverishly. Now and then a lady visitor, muzzled and led by her mankind, daringly ventures to violate the mysteries of this *Bonus Deus* on her way to the Debating Hall.

UNDERGRAD BROTHER [*cross because his dinner has been cut short, and bored because he has promised to show the place to an ineffectual and Philistinish mother and a young, pretty, and very enthusiastic sister*] We had better

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

have some coffee at once, I think, and then go to the Debating Hall straight. There's really nothing much to be seen here. It's just like any other club, I suppose.

INEFFECTUAL MOTHER [*timidly*] But, remember, dear, we have never been in a man's club before——

U. B. [*resenting especially the being called "dear" in the earshot of possible friends*] Oh, well, if you are so keen, come along upstairs.

*[He proceeds to march off ungraciously, leaving mother and sister to struggle through the male crowd in the Lobby. On the stairs, to his unexpected joy, he is hailed by a chum and devoted admirer of his sister, who is willingly induced to join the party as cicerone.]*

DEVOTED CHUM [*mainly to pretty sister*] I'll show you the smoking-room if you like. You would like to have a peep at our School for Scandal, I am sure.

*[He opens the door, and the ladies with bated skirts shyly stand in the doorway while the room is explained. The various members already enjoying their post-prandial tobacco, at the rustle of the audacious petticoat, stare stolidly at the furtive intruders, assume the most luxurious attitudes, and smoke furiously.]*

ENTHUSIASTIC SISTER [*with a sigh*] How nice! How very nice!

## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

U. B. [*cynically*] Oh, don't be shy, Letty! Make yourself at home, pray.

E. S. [*admiringly, to Devoted Chum*] You men certainly know how to make yourselves comfortable. [*Seeing her brother fidgeting*] Can't we stay *one minute* longer?

[*She has failed to observe that mamma, who is only interested in one undergrad, and not at all in smoking-rooms, has slipped away to study the literature provided for "The Coffee and Smoking-Room," which supplies the maternal mind with much food for thought.*

U. B. [*with fraternal brutality*] Perhaps you'd like to join them, Letty; they'd be awfully pleased to have your genial company. You always did prefer the society of boys, as you call them, to that of girls. [*Mincingly*] They're such *nice* boys, too. Anyway, I must rescue the mater from the clutches of the *Purple Journal*.

[*He turns away, and the pair are obliged to follow them. Coffee is ordered, and a corner of the Coffee-room appropriated. After a restless ten minutes the U. B. again intervenes.*

U. B. [*with savage jocularly*] I thought you wanted to hear the debate, Letty. When you've done toying with the dregs of your cup, perhaps you'll come. You'll miss all the Private Business.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

[*Miss Letty ignores this, but the D. C. whispers aside*] You lead the way, old chap; we'll follow.

U. B. [*aloud*] I see; Letty evidently wishes to have Private Business of her own first. [*He stalks off surlily with his mother.*]

D. C. [*humbly*] Is there any hurry? [*With a nervous laugh*] We have abolished the chaperones, I fancy, and don't need now to hear the arguments stated publicly.

E. S. [*who has been goaded to rudeness by her brother's taunts*] But we can't sit here like the babes in the wood, can we?—and I wouldn't miss the Debate for worlds.

[*She hurries after her mother, followed precipitately by the D. C.*]

[*The Union is now in a state of fine animation, members buzzing everywhere like bees about to swarm. The Gallery, where the party find seats with difficulty, is crammed with ladies of every age and type, awaiting the debate with the cold-blooded eagerness of Roman matrons awaiting a gladiatorial combat. The historic benches on the floor are well filled with lolling undergrads, carefully wearing their headgear until the officers come in, whose artificial indifference contrasts finely with the tension of the packed gallery surveying them.*]



## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

E. S. [*enthusiastically*]. So this is the hall that has echoed with——

U. B. [*caustically*] The rot of so many generations. Yes, it is.

E. S. [*continuing*] Where Macaulay and——

U. B. [*still more caustically*] Oh, he was a Cambridge man. We don't produce that sort here, thank the Lord. Besides, the Hall is quite new, and is echoing at present with only your voice, Letty. Oh, I know you're in your element. You can look down on two hundred men, though they won't look up to you.

[*The E. S. is thus finally driven into an intimate tête-à-tête with the D. C., who tries to avoid explaining to her who all the celebrities are.*

[*Punctually at eight o'clock the officers enter, hats and caps are whipped off, and the proceedings begin. The President and his colleagues take their time-honoured seats, and assume the time-honoured attitude—a cross between the rigidity of a Tussaud waxwork and the stolid solemnity of an Egyptian monumental king. The Secretary at his table at once begins to scribble with avidity, like the jurymen in "Alice in Wonderland," while every five minutes a very tiny messenger boy enters, big with his trivial message, confers with an official, and retires more important than before.*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*The serious baiting of officials by the self-appointed "wits" of the Society is the first item. N.B.—This is called Private Business.*

A VERY DULL UNDERGRAD [*with a woolly voice*] I should like to ask the Hon. Librarian if he is aware [*an element of learned ferocity may be detected*] that page 235—the climax of the work—in the fifty-third edition of "Idylls from the Gutter," by Mrs. Scavenger, is missing, and whether he will supply a new copy?

[*The Hon. Librarian, whose voice is even more woolly, after a dignified pause, is understood, as the reporters say, to reply that he is aware of the melancholy fact, and that the subject has been engaging, and will engage, his most serious attention.*

ANOTHER UNDERGRAD [*speaking with hysterical passion in a shrill falsetto from the back of the hall*] I should like to ask the Hon. Junior Treasurer whether he considers the apple-dumplings provided in the Society's Dining-room are fit for human consumption?

[*The House, always ready to halloo if there is a chance of blood being drawn, cheers lustily, and the cheer is punctuated by an ecstatic ripple of laughter from the Gallery.*

THE HON. J. T. [*very alertly and smartly, jumping up like a Jack-in-the-box*] Certainly, sir. [*The House cheers again, even more lustily.*

## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

A. U. [*still more shrilly and tragically*]  
Has the Hon. Junior Treasurer ever eaten an  
apple-dumpling? [*Sharp cheering.*]

THE HON. J. T. [*very pertly*] No, sir.  
[*Roars of laughter and much cheering.*]

A. U. [*egged on by his friends*] May I ask,  
if not, why not? [*Renewed cheering*]

THE HON. J. T. [*smiling sweetly*] Because,  
sir [*this with a wave to his lady friends in the  
gallery to signify that the coup de grâce is  
coming*] I apprehend I am neither so greedy  
[*great laughter*] nor so foolish [*renewed  
laughter*] as the Hon. Member. [*He resumes  
his seat amidst a storm of applause.*]

[*The member with the falsetto voice, how-  
ever, not to be scored off, solemnly moves  
the adjournment of the House "to con-  
sider the state of the apple-dumplings  
of the Society." After half-an-hour's  
wrangling, when everything from apple-  
dumplings to Aristotle has been ex-  
haustively discussed, the motion is finally  
rejected, and Private Business begins  
again with renewed vigour.*]

ANOTHER MEMBER [*whose voice is shaking  
either with nervousness or laughter, or both*]  
I wish to ask the President whether, in view  
of the momentous question we are going to  
discuss, and the possibilities of undue influence,  
the Gallery should not be cleared?

[*This causes great disorder. Shouts of*

"Order! order!" "Sit down!" "Go on!" etc., ring from all sides, while consternation reigns among the ladies.

THE PRESIDENT [*quite equal to the occasion, and with invincible fluency*] By Rule XVIII. Clause IV. § 3, the Hon. Member's question is out of order. No other member having any question to ask, the House will now proceed to Public Business.

[*This answer is delivered in one breath, and the House being utterly ignorant of the Rules, and loving to be bullied by a strong President, tamely submits. Everyone then settles down to listen to the Hon. Mover of the epoch-making motion: "That this House demands the instantaneous abolition of the Chaperone."*]

FIRST AVERAGE UNDERGRAD [*growlingly to his neighbour*] Lord! but this chap is dull. He can't even be rude to anyone.

SECOND A. U. [*with conviction*] Dull! he's a perfect piffler. Did you ever hear such a crock? I suppose he's only put up for the other speakers to play the goat with. [*With some interest*] Fancy, there's Lothair actually on the floor, and on the opposition side! I thought he always went to the Gallery with a selected bundle of his flames.

FIRST A. U. [*laughing*] The Gallery's a trifle off with Lothair just now. He fell in last week with some Americans—or, rather, one

## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

American—a darn'd pretty girl, but a bit of a flyer. He fed her "mummy" and herself—fizz, you know, and all that—and then brought 'em down here. What do you think she said? Half-way through the Debate she turned coolly and drawled out, "I saay, I've forgotten my hanky. Can you give me the loan of a blow?" [*In answer to an incredulous look*] It's a fact, I'll swear. Oh, Lord! to Lothair of all men, too! [*Convulsed with laughter*] Yes, the Gallery is a bit "off" just at present. And he won't believe she was having him on. [*Warningly*] But don't you say anything to Lothair, or mention I told you, for he's as sore as a piece of raw beef.

SECOND A. U. [*agreeably*] You bet I'll hold my tongue. When Lothair's sniffy I keep out of his way. [*Confidentially*] But I know a better yarn than that. . . .

[*The conversation dwindles down to a bluffing match in American anecdotes.*

[*The Debate meanwhile has been pursuing the even tenor of its platitudinous way. At this point it reaches the level of a personal incident and "a Scene."*

AN HON. MEMBER [*interrupting angrily, and with a menacing gesture at the speaker on the other side of the table*] I rise to order, sir. Is the Hon. Member from St. Theresa in order in referring to my attitude as "infamous"?

THE PRESIDENT [*who had been lulled to*

*sleep by the previous peroration, starts up and cries sternly]* Order! Order! The Hon. Member from St. Theresa is in possession of the House. [*Much dissentience on the left.*] He will no doubt explain his meaning.

THE HON. MEMBER [*petulantly*] But, sir— [*Cries of "Sit down!" "Order!" "Hear! hear!" ring out.*]

THE SPEAKER [*very sweetly and coolly when a pause occurs*] I was not referring to the attitude of the Hon. Member from St. Paul's. [*With bland incisiveness and dilatory enunciation*] If I had been, "infamous" is by no means the colourless epithet I should have employed.

[*This example of the retort, undergraduate and courteous, is received with a storm of cheers, followed by a counter storm of disapproval. A deadlock is imminent. The Gallery sways in a state of electrified sympathy, and the President, though manfully striving to ride the whirlwind, is momentarily impotent. Suddenly a handkerchief, dropped by a fair but excited hand in the Gallery, flutters down. Its aerial course is watched with breathless anxiety by the whole House, and when it finally settles in loving folds on the President's unconscious head—solvuntur risu tabulæ—a roar of pent-up laughter bursts out, and "the incident" is at an end.*]



## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

BLITHE UNDERGRAD [*in the Gallery*]  
Now that's what I call a rattlin' speech.

[*The Great Big Union Gun has just resumed his seat amid salvoes of delirious applause—the speech being the customary patchwork of clap-trap appeals, purloined epigrams, forged statistics, cheap and risqué sarcasms, mangled quotations, spread-eagle rhetoric, and windmill gestures.*]

SEVERELY SCIENTIFIC YOUNG LADY  
[*N.B.—She is a Lecturer herself, and presumably knows the ropes*] Ah! [*putting up her pince-nez to inspect the rash critic*] Really? [*very dryly*] I must confess I was not impressed; the humour was singularly vulgar, the rhetoric tepid and tawdry, the argument positively gelatinous and pulpy.

B. U. [*taking a breath, and fidgeting under her microscopical inspection*] Ah! yes . . . [*laughing in a hypnotised way*] but he was awfully funny, and he simply wiped the floor with the opener.

S. S. Y. L. [*austerely*] He certainly descended low enough to do that.

B. U. [*with forlorn but perennial hope*] Oh, come now, you mustn't be too hard. It's only a "rag debate."

S. S. Y. L. [*coldly*] I beg your pardon.

B. U. [*with the wriggle of the rabbit as it comes to close quarters with the boa-constrictor*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

Well, you know, a debate for the Ladies, when everyone can say what rot he pleases. [*Feeling very acutely that this has not assisted matters, he adds*] When you've got to give the Gallery a run for its money.

S. S. Y. L. [*with magnificent scorn*] I think I understand your meaning. It is an effort to bring the Gallery down to the level of the speakers' minds. [*Waving away with her pince-nez all attempts to explain further, she resumes*] Young men are so deficient in critical acumen. They have no sense of logic. Surely [*with the condescension of Culture*] an orator should have at least moral backbone. *Your* [*bitingly emphatic*] orator is clearly ethically invertebrate.

[*The B. U. takes another deep breath, but fails to come up to time. He is thus reduced in two rounds to silence—if a blithe glare and a dissentient snort can be construed as silence.*

S. S. Y. L. [*after a few minutes more, very coldly*] I don't think we ought to listen any more.

[*She rises, collects her chaperones, and retires.*

B. U. [*sighing, as the swish of her dress with its majestic femininity comes echoing from the stairs*] There, but for the grace of God, goes —[*breaking off with a shudder*]—to think I was ever touched in that quarter! And yet that she should be cursed with such good looks!

[*He settles himself to sleep gratefully.*



## A FIELD-NIGHT AT THE UNION

[After the speech of the Great Big Union Gun there is a tremendous exit from the floor of the Hall. The deluge of mediocrity and small fry rushes in where the orators of reputation fear to tread. The Debate tends to become almost an intermittent eruption of inaudible and incoherent irrelevancies. The lady visitors, however, with limpet-like pertinacity, linger to the end, determined to see the matter out.]

BORED UNDERGRAD [waiting patiently in the passage outside the Debating Hall to record his vote in "the book provided for the purpose"] I say, which way are you going to vote? I should like to score off the chaperones if I could.

SECOND DITTO [lazily] Then you needn't vote at all. You've only to speak your mind a little louder, for you have got a group of 'em at your elbow.

[This is quite true, for the aforesaid Book is carefully posted so as to be well in the way of the staircase to the Gallery.]

FIRST B. U. [very distinctly] I don't really care a hang. I shall shut my eyes and make a pencil mark somewhere. Whether they're abolished or not is all one to me, [more distinctly] and they know it. Let's hurry up, for I am dying for a drink.

[He accordingly shuts his eyes when his

turn comes, and succeeds in registering a vote quite unintelligible.

[In the House the motion is ultimately carried by an overwhelming majority, a thoughtful rider being appended that a copy of the resolution be sent to all Heads of Colleges and Halls, with their respective societies. The proceedings then terminate, many ladies resenting the fact that the debate has ended at so early an hour as 10.45 p.m.]

## VII

### A FOOTBALL MATCH

SCENE - *The Football Ground of St. Theresa's.*

TIME - *About 3 p.m.*

OCCASION *The Match of the O. U. R. F. C.  
v. the (famous) Red Pagans.*

An Oxford November day, dark and grey, with a dripping, biting wind scouring the field. Everywhere undergrads and citizens stand impatiently on the sloppy grass round the roped-in arena, while numerous dogs of every breed and aggressiveness career snappingly about. On one side of the enclosure is a small boarded space for the ladies, carefully placed so as to face the inquisitorial North-Easter. Here a tightly-packed herd of ladies, protecting with their muffs what they consider to be their complexions, watch with animation the preliminary practice of a few of the 'Varsity team, who, to the great delight of various small boys, make distressingly wild efforts to kick goals. As there is a "gate," the ground is carefully walled in with canvas; but outside, the loafing cabbies, and the *élite* of those who cannot afford a shilling, climb to various posts of vantage, and shout comments to each other with painful distinctness. In the background a circle of classic towers and spires supplies a surprising academic atmosphere.

FIRST LOAFING UNDERGRAD [*very discontented at being mulcted of his shilling*]

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Well, where are we going? All the best places are already bagged.

SECOND L. U. [*equally cross*] If you hadn't brought those beastly dogs, which always get lost, we should have been here hours ago. [*Scanning the crowded auditorium*] Which way is the wind blowing?

FIRST L. U. [*turning up the enormous collar of a capacious greatcoat*] It doesn't take long to find *that* out. [*With a shudder*] I suppose we must face it.

SECOND L. U. [*dryly*] If we want to see anything of the game.

[*They proceed to patrol the ropes in the hope of ousting the unwary from some snug corner.*]

FIRST L. U. [*with a faint flicker of joy*] There's the place for us.

SECOND L. U. [*starting suddenly*] I can't go there. Don't you see? My tutor—confound him! Who'd have thought of finding the old smug at a footer match? I have just written him a note to say I had caught the "flu," and couldn't come to his jaw to-night.

[*He tries to slip away, but to his disgust the Tutor recognises him, smiles, and then tackles him. The L. U. at once proceeds to cough as cavernously as a sound pair of lungs will allow.*]

TUTOR [*with a smile of sweetness and light*]

## A FOOTBALL MATCH

I suppose I may congratulate you on a speedy recovery? We aren't all so lucky.

SECOND L. U. [*sulkily*] No, I suppose not. I can't say, though, I am feeling quite the thing.

TUTOR [*sympathetically*] Yes, you look a little pulled down still. You really must be more careful. [*He adds as an icy blast sweeps over them*] Yet there is nothing like fresh air for a bad cold.

SECOND L. U. [*as the Tutor leaves him*] Confound his sarcasm!

FIRST L. U. [*with deep enjoyment*] I rather think he had you on toast that time. You looked an awful ass.

SECOND L. U. [*reflectively*] And I shall have to go to his jaw after all!

FIRST MISOGYNIST [*surveying the line of ladies with consummate displeasure*] I really can't see why the women should be allowed in free while we pay a shilling. If they were good-looking, or understood the game, it would be different.

SECOND MISOGYNIST [*still more bitterly*] And they have boards to stand on, too. My feet are simply soaking in this wet grass.

FIRST M. [*cheerfully*] Well, you can always get on to the boards if you want to. Go and claim acquaintance with the Dean's wife, and she will take you under her portly wing.

SECOND M. [*with gloomy pensiveness*] That

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

means tea after the match. She is always here to whip up recruits for her footer feeds.

FIRST M. [*lightly*] And don't forget my love to the daughters. Their gush will help to keep you warm.

SECOND M. [*stamping his damp boots*] The question is whether a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Dean is more tolerable than wet feet.

[*While he is trying to find an answer, a brutal athlete, fooling about with a ball in the middle of the field, kicks it with malice prepense right into the centre of the group of ladies. This kindly act is greeted with a roar of laughter.*]

FIRST M. [*delighted*] Excellent—excellent! That ought to choke some of them off for the future. [*With relief*] Ah! here they are at last!

[*A long line of the famous red jerseys winds into the arena, followed by a long line of the equally famous white jerseys of the 'Varsity. The favourites of the latter are heralded with a sharp round of cheering. In five minutes the whistle has sounded, and all woes are forgotten in rapt attention to the game. The course of the play draws a continuous boom of muffled applause, swelling now and then into delirious shouts.*]

AN UNDERGRAD CONNOISSEUR [*sharply*] The 'Varsity are packing very badly. They are getting screwed in the scrum.



## A FOOTBALL MATCH

ANOTHER CONNOISSEUR [*screaming fiercely*]  
Oh! keep on the ball, 'Varsity! What on earth's the use of heeling out? What the deuce are our halves doing?

A CITIZEN CRITIC [*sarcastically to the 'Varsity forwards*] What are you a-waitin' for? [*After a muddle in front of goal*] You arn't posin' to be photographed.

ANOTHER CITIZEN [*to the Referee*] You call yourself a Referee? You ain't no more than a whistlin' jay!

A RUDE VOICE [*bawling hoarsely from a tree above the canvas*] Give 'em beans, 'Varsity! Buck 'em up, 'Varsity!

ANOTHER RUDE VOICE [*bawling from another tree*] That's the way, 'Varsity! Put the fear of Gawd in them! Break their bloody bones, 'Varsity—every one of their bloody bones!

[*This spirited advice is repeated with stentorian uniformity, and evokes cordial cheers, the crowd swaying excitedly this way and that, and delighting especially in the roughest play. No less interest is shown in the ladies' enclosure, where the conversation is somewhat more varied.*]

ENTHUSIASTIC YOUNG LADY [*waving her muff*] Oh! isn't it fun! I don't know anything about the game, but I do enjoy seeing them throw each other about.



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

[*A stop in the game occurs suddenly, the players grouping round a prostrate figure.*]

E. Y. L. [*eagerly*] Oh! what have they stopped for? [*With disgust*] A brute of a man trod on my skirt, and I missed that.

UNDERGRADUATE ATTENDANT [*coolly*] Nothing much. Smith has crocked his knee, I fancy. He put it out a week ago, you know. [*With disinterested regret*] I don't suppose he'll be able to play against Cambridge now.

E. Y. L. [*calmly*] That's a pity. But I wish I had seen him hurt—it's so interesting. [*Inquiringly*] It's not a proper match unless someone is damaged, is it?

U. A. [*promptly*] Of course not.

SEVERE YOUNG WOMAN [*as Smith limps off the ground with the help of two friends*] What a degrading spectacle!

AIRY UNDERGRAD [*with contemptuous staccato*] Degrading—to put your knee out? I call it jolly plucky. Besides, that's nothing. Just you wait till they've got their blood up. When old Bruiser gets his monkey roused, you should see him—it's ripping.

S. Y. W. [*with a Catonian look*] I declare, it's worse than a bull-fight.

A. U. [*blandly, and with increased respect*] Ever seen a bull-fight? Must be rather sport.

S. Y. W. [*somewhat taken aback*] I can't say exactly that I have ever seen one, but I have read——

## A FOOTBALL MATCH

A. U. [*losing all respect*] Oh, read—only read! Then how do you know this is worse?

[*The S. Y. W. evades answering this good-humoured poser by a hasty flight.*

ANOTHER UNDERGRAD [*taking advantage of the squash in the enclosure to address a Lady Student under whose lee he has sheltered himself*] I didn't see you at lecture this morning.

L. S. [*smiling, having first assured herself that her neighbours are really absorbed in the game*] Of course you didn't. I wasn't there.

A. U. [*blankly*] Aren't you coming any more?

L. S. [*ingenuously*] Why? How silly you are! What is the use? We never can talk at lecture.

A. U. [*pointedly*] But we can look.

[*The L. S. thinks it proper to resume her study of the game.*

A. U. [*finding this dull, adds*] I've a splendid idea. You ride a bike, don't you? [*The L. S. nods slightly.*] Then come out on the Woodstock road to-morrow, and opposite Teddy's school puncture your tyre—you can do it easily with a pin, you know—and I'll be there to help. That's better than lectures, eh?

L. S. [*feeling that an effort must be made*] How can you suggest such a thing?

[*She turns her back on him, and tries to find an interest in the match.*

L. S. [*after a quarter of an hour's tedious silence*] I must go now. Good-bye!

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

A. U. [*very demurely*] Good-bye!

L. S. [*giving him two gloved fingers*].  
Good-bye! [*Very carelessly*] Where exactly  
did you say I was to put the pin in?

[*He repeats the nefarious scheme in detail,  
and she works her way out with the  
severe air of conscious virtue and resisted  
temptation.*]

[*The biting wind produces its results slowly,  
various spectators being driven to leave  
their posts and save their lives by per-  
ambulating the arena. After half-time,  
too, the interest in the game somewhat  
relaxes.*]

DISCONTENTED FOOTBALLER [*savagely*] If  
our backs don't look out they'll be "in" again.  
It all comes from playing Sprinter. He's only  
good to go, but against halves like theirs he  
funks! Ugh! Look at him!

[*Poor Sprinter, who so far has not had a  
chance, may be seen loafing about—an  
unemployed three-quarter.*]

HIS CHUM [*with the grin of a Job's com-  
forter*] Of course, they ought to be playing  
you.

D. F. [*modestly*] Well, anyway I don't funk.  
But Sprinter squares the reporters. If you only  
stand them drinks, they'll write you into a  
"blue" as easy as—Hullo!

[*A sharp pass from a Half to Sprinter  
and he is off, flashing through the Pagan*]

## A FOOTBALL MATCH

*Forwards as mysteriously as the Röntgen Rays through the body, and amidst ecstatic cheering triumphantly secures a try.*

H. C. [*drawing breath at last*] I suppose you could have done that, eh?

D. F. [*still more modestly*] Well, I don't know. You can't compare science and fluking.

*[Curiously enough, this remark tickles his chum's sense of the ridiculous, though why is more than the D. F. can see.]*

PERIPATETIC DON [*to brother Peripatetic*] Hullo! How are you?

BROTHER PERIPATETIC [*shortly*] What do you mean? Is that a new joke?

P. D. [*laughing*] Oh dear no! I heard your undergrad friends had been lubricating you with bonfire oil, and I was surprised not to find you more unctuous.

B. P. [*driven to make a clean breast of it*] I am sick of the whole business, and so [*somewhat more slowly*] I have got myself engaged. Somebody else will have to be Dean now, and I hope he'll like it.

P. D. [*with the placidity of confirmed celibacy*] H'm! Out of the bonfire into the——

B. P. [*grimly cutting him short*] It's no joke, I assure you; but [*in the tone of the tailless fox*] it is better to marry than to burn.

*[The darkness begins to descend swiftly, and, though the last ten minutes are*

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*fought out with concentrated fury, there is a general feeling of relief when the Referee's whistle sends the frozen crowd home to tea.*

HOSPITABLE UNDERGRAD [*clapping a friend on the back who is standing disconsolately whistling and shouting in order to collect a noble army of dogs*] Come into tea when you have done.

HIS FRIEND [*gratefully*] Sorry, old chap, but I am already two deep in teas.

H. U. [*reprovingly*] A tea-fight? Not in the Parks system, I hope?

H. F. [*sorrowfully*] Like the baby—only a little one. Oh! it's all right—they're all of them over forty, worse luck!

H. U. [*still more reprovingly*] That's no excuse; it only makes it more disgraceful. I shall expect you all the same, so be sure you drop in. You'll be hungry after two teas, and, besides, you must get up an appetite for Hall, you know.

H. F. [*coolly*] I'll do my best, and [*thoughtfully*] I say, don't eat up all the buttered buns.

[*The crowd drifts away with marvellous rapidity, leaving the world to the moist darkness and the hoarse cries of the newspaper boys.*]



## VIII

### IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

SCENE - *The College of St. Theresa.*

TIME - *About 8.15 p.m.*

OCCASION - *The Annual Pre-Lenten Concert  
for the Benefit of the Parks  
System.*

In the foreground the College porch swarming with undergrads awaiting their womankind in every attitude from fussy excitement to languid indifference, while the cabs discharge numerous feminine burdens as near the red-carpeted stairs as jealousy will allow; in the background the glowing stained-glass windows of the Hall, the cloisters leading to which are adorned on the lavishly allusive principle of the Real Shakespearean stage—the whole lit by flickering gas-lamps and the uncertain rays of a tepid pre-vernal moon. From time to time “Alarums without” (signifying that an orchestra injudiciously composed of third-rate professionals and conscript amateurs is tuning up and may break out at any moment) are agreeably added to the “confused noise within.”

FIRST WAITING UNDERGRAD [*restlessly enjoying an ephemeral cigarette*] Got any women coming?

SECOND W. U. [*luxuriating in a permanent cigar*] No, thank Heaven! [*Incredulously*] Have you?



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FIRST W. U. [*gloomily*] Yes, confound it! I've Mrs. Parasite and the Parasite girls. [*Lugubriously*] They practically asked me for tickets, and a fellow cannot very well refuse. Cost me ten bob apiece, too, and my tailor dunning me!

SECOND W. U. [*sympathetically*] Can't you sham illness?

FIRST W. U. [*bitterly*] That won't bring me back my good ready money. Besides [*with profound melancholy*] you don't know Mrs. Parasite—she'd want to come up to my bedder and give me Somebody's beastly food for infants.

SECOND W. U. [*cheerily, as he watches the process of disembarkation*] H'm! The Oxford slush is rather cruel—proves that there isn't an ankle worth looking at in the place. [*The fateful cab arriving*] Well, a pleasant evening to you—there'll be hot whisky going in my rooms later, if you're fit for it. [*And so retires, leaving his friend to "face the music."*]

MRS. PARASITE [*fluently, as she shakes hands*] It was so kind of you to offer us tickets. [*Drawing him aside*] I hope you won't mind, but we had two young friends with us—such nice girls—and I hadn't the heart to leave them at home—as you had been so kind, etc., etc.

FIRST W. U. [*trying to be polite*] Oh, delighted to see them. I daresay I can manage

## IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

about the tickets. [*Aside and viciously*]  
Another couter, blacken her eyes!

[*He stalks off in thinly-veiled dudgeon with the party in tow.*]

[*The Hall presents the usual concertual appearance, i.e., a dais adorned with scraggy palms, an orchestra and choir packed in ungainly tiers, a grand piano conveying an offensive advertisement, and an area crammed with ridiculously small chairs where the human throng, despite the desperate efforts of a limited committee, endeavours to combine securing the best places and the largest number of programmes with obstructive efforts to recognize friends. At the last moment the Provost's party sails up the central gangway of the front row, amidst considerable feminine interest.*]

MRS. CURIOSITY [*eagerly*] Now, tell me who everyone is—I am dying to know.

YOUNG DON [*mounting an eyeglass*] Well, first is Mrs. Provost, got up in black velvet and lace like a Titian portrait; with her is our Ambassador at Timbuctu—a badly-restored replica of Bismarck; then there is an Anarchist poet and his wife——

MRS. C. [*admiringly*] Ah! she is distinguished.

Y. D. [*dryly*] She is—very. She's the daughter of a South African billionaire, so

her spouse can advocate at his leisure the coming millennium and the dynamite Parcel Post on the proceeds of Sweated Kaffirs. The two girls behind are the Provost's progeny—the one a prudish smug, the other always in the last stages of a galloping flirtation. [*Carelessly*] The rest the usual ruck of an Oxford dinner-party—brains and dowdies.

[*The concert promptly begins with a bellicose overture, in which the brass (undergrads) completely trample on the strings (professionals).*]

ASPIRING MATRON [*an announcement having been made from the platform*] Let me see—who wrote the “Kreutzer Sonata”? I know it so well, too—[*with placid self-reproachfulness*] what is my memory coming to? I shall forget my own name next.

AVERAGE UNDERGRAD [*much perturbed, but feeling, as he is wearing a committee rosette, that his reputation is at stake*] Oh! er, wasn't it that—er—Russian fellow, what's his name, who thinks we should all go without clothes?

A. M. [*much relieved*] Ah! Tolstoi! Of course, of course! How could I be so stupid?

INQUIRING DAUGHTER [*naïvely, but persistently*] But why is it called the “Kreutzer Sonata”?

A. U. [*recklessly*] Oh, the subject's from Ibsen, you know. [*Bashfully*] You'll understand if you've ever seen the second Mrs. Tanquer—

## IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

A. M. [*who is a British believer in the principle of the jeune fille, hurriedly*] How thoughtless you are, Isabel, to chatter so! Can't you see your neighbours glaring at you?

[*Isabel is crushed, but—the usual result of tyranny—the rebellious spirit is driven to burrow underground. She promptly registers a vow to learn more of Ibsen and Tolstoi later.*]

FIRST UNDERGRAD [*in the audience, critically surveying the orchestra*] Old Billy's having a good time with the drums. [*Billy, like all good drummers, is much occupied with tuning his instrument.*] He looks like a bath-assistant turning on the water—don't he?

SECOND UNDERGRAD [*as a gorgeous roll flashes out defiantly four bars ahead*] Yes, I fancy his practice with the gloves comes in handy. But [*with genuine surprise*] what's Lothair, of all people, doing up there in the choir?

FIRST U. [*with admiring jealousy*] Oh, he likes to sit up there and ogle all the girls. Lothair knows a thing or two, you bet; he always forgets to bring his score, and then he looks over with Miss Lighthead. Just glance at 'em—like cherubs on a Christmas card who have eaten too much pudding and know it.

A BLUE-EYED BUXOM DAUGHTER OF PHILISTIA [*eagerly*] Oh, Professor Gallio, do

introduce me—I love a wild man at a concert; looking at him always makes me feel so hungry, and that is so nice for the interval.

PROF. GALLIO [*agreeably*] Certainly. But you mustn't mind what he says. He's dreadfully sniffy; in fact, poor fellow, he suffers from chronic musical catarrh.

[*The introduction to the neighbour is at once made. He is a Musical Higher Critic with a lean, unwholesome face, and the hair of a Wardour Street Absalom, and during the symphony kept up a thematic ground bass of staccato protests in complicated counterpoint.*]

B. D. P. [*opening fire rapturously*] Wasn't it charming?

MUSICAL HIGHER CRITIC [*in jerky volleys of a shrill falsetto*] That? The most impudent item in an impudent programme! The idea of the Dante Symphony, the most lurid tone-painting of the century, being interpreted by that finnickin' popinjay of a conductor!

B. D. P. [*surreptitiously fortifying herself with chocolates*] But they made such a cheerful noise; it reminded me of our County Council band in Gath. [*Condescendingly*] It's so much better than the one at Askalon, you know, for we've hired a real Amalekite to conduct.

M. H. C. [*writhing in the anguish of a Gothic gargoyle*] To conduct the Dante you must be a devil incarnate. [*Hypnotically con-*



## IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

*centrating his feverish eyes on her, causing her to crush two juicy chocolates in her best white kid gloves.]* You must. The Inferno of that [shuddering] band was a rococo model slum, infernal only in its gentility.

B. D. P. [*fanning herself with a contented purr*] But were you ever a—a devil, Mr. Scherzo?

M. H. C. [*grimly*] Ten minutes ago I suffered the pains of a lost soul [*adding with an unearthly cackle*] He! he! the band certainly didn't.

PROF. G. [*surveying the reposing band*] Perhaps not. But, anyway, they are the damned now—eh? [*Having won his reward in a bright smile and a mystical scowl, Prof. G. lapses once more into the Roman indifference of "The Governing Body."*]

B. D. P. [*turning enthusiastically to her double-chinned mamma*] Oh, mamma, do listen! Mr. Scherzo has just told me how nice it is to be a devil!

DOUBLE-CHINNED MAMMA [*starting in horror from a comfortable sleep*] My dearest Michal!

B. D. P. [*with redoubled energy*] And if you care about music you'll have to be one too!

[*Luckily the interval takes place, so Michal can be safely rescued from such terrible society. The guests stream out in search of refreshments, and for the most part stroll defiantly about the airy cloisters,*



*trying to believe that early spring is really almost as warm as midsummer.*

YOUNG DON [*whose hopeless aim is to realise his Higher Soul*] Ah! delightful! The first part of the programme was a perfect drought of the Dry Beauty.

BROTHER DITTO [*who is deliberately a Lower Animal*] So I should think. And [*with his eye on the claret cup*] now I'm going to flood my better self with the Wet Ugliness.

Y. D. [*trying to console himself with a bad mot*] "*Avant toi le Déluge!*" As a friend of ours would say, that way lies the jail of our ambitions!

LOTHAIR [*cruelly deserting Miss Lighthouse to pine à la Ariadne (undergrads as the coming Satyrs in the background), and making for a sprightly American beauty*] Cannot I offer you some light refreshment, Miss Stripes?

AMERICAN BEAUTY [*knowing that to L. the Ephemeral Etiquettes are as the Eternal Infinities*] You're varry kind. [*Confidingly*] Why, I guess it is about time to take the crumples out of my knees.

[*She is delighted to observe that Lothair almost assumes the piteous pose of the Dying Gladiator at her feet.*]

FLIGHTY DAMSEL [*sitting out with a potent and wise Fourth Year Man*] How wicked you are [*giggling behind her fan*]! I simply don't believe you!

## IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

F. Y. M. [*seriously*] But one must footle, you know; and it's such ripping fun tripping up people.

F. D. [*putting her head on one side, like a badly-stuffed bird*] I'll believe you when you've given me a specimen.

F. Y. M. [*confidently*] Just you wait a second, and then watch. [*An appropriate pair passes.*] See, I put out my foot—so!

[*The absorbed young man promptly stumbles, coming down heavily with his innocent companion. The F. Y. M. adroitly saves the young lady by a delicate but firm support. She glances at her unfortunate escort ruefully rubbing his shins, and—such is feminine gratitude!—thanks the author of the mishap with blushing effusiveness!*]

F. Y. M. [*triumphantly, as the pair disappears*] How's that—eh? Right and left barrel, I take it.

F. D. [*jealously recollecting the details*] The left, very considerably left, as far as I could see.

[*Five minutes later, much sobered, she beats a retreat, and the F. Y. M. can never understand why she cuts him dead for the future.*]

MRS. CIRCE [*absorbing a Graduate Protégé*] Ah, Mr. Diogenes!—just the man I wanted to meet!

MR. D. [*smiling in reply, but remarking to*

himself] And just the woman I wanted to avoid.

MRS. C. [*with seductive candour, because she is "the prettiest woman in Oxford"*] I am in a very bad temper.

MR. D. [*agreeably, because he is "the most agreeable man in Oxford"*] That is not very surprising, is it? Our college music is not exactly calculated to soothe the academic breast.

MRS. C. [*from downcast eyes, as she plays with the flowers in her corsage*] If you are going to be cynical you positively must come and talk to me. I want to be picked up.

MR. D. [*gravely as he inspects an irreproachable figure*] I can hardly undertake to do that, I think.

[*Mrs. C. delicately reproves him with her fan, and they find chairs.*]

MRS. C. [*frankly*] The fact is, I want to get up a little subscription dance at the Bardolph, and those horrid Proctors have had an attack of morality, and refused their consent.

MR. D. [*lightly*] Really! Your nice girls, I suppose, are not fit for the innocent undergrad to associate with.

MRS. C. [*laughing*] Perhaps. [*With a delightful moue of contempt*] They said it interfered with work. [*Whereat they both ripple over.*] And we wanted [*sadly*] so much one little kick-up before we are buried in Lent.

## IN THE HALLS OF HARMONY

MR. D. [*correctingly*] Kick-ups are very undignified in a University.

MRS. C. [*vigorously*] Pooh! As if we were all not perishing of dignity up here! [*Coaxingly*] You must introduce me to a Proctor, for [*with not unjustifiable pride*] if I could speak to him face to face——

MR. D. [*appreciating the idea, thoughtfully*] I know a woman can square everything, from the home circle to——

MRS. C. [*unselfishly interrupting*] And then think how winning the girls can be!

MR. D. [*alarmed*] Oh, whatever you do, keep the girls out of it—you can hint sackcloth and slumming for the week after, if you like—but [*impressively*], believe me, stick to the blandishments of the poor widow.

MRS. C. [*much mollified*] Well, if I succeed [*radiantly*] you shall lead the *cotillon* with me; it's a bargain.

[*Whereupon the poor Proctor is immediately handed over to Mrs. C.'s tender glances—and the cotillon was the best Oxford has yet seen.*]

[*The second part of the Programme is now in full swing, and proves even duller than the first, as it consists mainly of the contributions of a thriving local talent specially composed for "this interesting occasion." The ladies, however, listen with avidity, and wonder how*]

*jaundiced critics can assert that the English are not a musical nation. About 11 p.m. they are released, and the customary genial Rugby scrimmage for wraps and cabs begins.*

MRS. JACKAL-TAMER [*enveloping herself in her voluminous cloak*] Ah, Dr. Fugue, quite a charming concert; better and better every year.

DR. F. [*bowing as sarcastically as his fur coat will allow*] Very good of you to say so, I'm sure.

MRS. J.-T. [*patronisingly*] But you go in too much for the classics. You should give us a nigger entertainment next year, and get the ladies of Oxford to help you.

DR. F. [*who can indulge in the chartered libertinism necessary to every real musician*] An excellent suggestion, Mrs. Jackal-Tamer. [*Sweetly*] Doubtless their experience in blackening each other's characters would be invaluable when they came to blacken each other's faces. [*They then part amicably.*]

MRS. J.-T. [*snorting to herself as she waddles into her brougham*] The old ruffian!

DR. F. [*to himself, as he lights a fat cigar to take him home*] The old tabby-cat! But I pulled her whiskers that time!

[*The evening is wound up with the still unsatisfied undergrads holding impromptu various overflow concerts of their own, including a thoughtful serenade of the Dean.*]



## IX

### CHEZ BONA DEA

SCENE - *The room of a lady student in the virginal cloisters of Lady Godiva Hall.*

TIME - *About 9 p.m.*

OCCASION - *A meeting of "The Cocoa Guild" (irreverently known to its enemies as the "Guzzle-Guzzle Club.")*

The room, with its photos, its books, its shaded lamp, and its masterly untidiness might almost be mistaken by a modern and presumably inexperienced Clodius for that of an inferior male undergrad—were it not for the hint of the daintily-draped bed and the saving leaven of femininity in the shape of flowers, cheap knick-knacks, a fashion paper, and a half-trimmed hat. The fragrant fumes of cocoa, and other seasonable liquids, arise from the shrine of Bona Dea—the hearth; while fit offerings of sweetmeats, chocolates, and cakes are strewn around. The votaries of the goddess include a selection from every type of the "Ewig Weibliches" (except that of the Blue-stockings as popularly conceived). For without disrespect it may be remarked that the Tailor-made, the New Amazon, The Serious Student—yes, and The Blood, are scattered about the room in the *dégagé* but classical attitudes of reposing Bacchantes.

HOSTESS OF THE EVENING [*picturesquely attired in a Liberty tea-gown and hair à*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

Rossetti] Who's for coffee and who's for cocoa? [*Briskly*] Cut up the cake some of you, and pass the chocolates. By the way [*with an air of overwhelming liberality*] there's Bovril, if anyone cares about it.

[*No one responds to this tempting offer, and despite the name of the club, the majority prefer to fillip their flagging brains with coffee.*]

A SERIOUS STUDENT [*to her neighbour, a blooming Amazon, with a pensive sigh as the sweets circulate unceasingly*] I can't think how you manage so many chocolates. I wish I could.

THE BLOOMING AMAZON [*with the laugh of pearly teeth*] It's really quite easy. [*Proudly*] I should like to see my digestion refuse any sweets I choose to offer it.

A BLOOD [*in a tailor-made gown, as she pushes her empty cup away*] Does anyone object?

[*No one objecting, she carefully selects a gold-tipped cigarette from her case and lights it airily. She is followed by one or two others, but the majority limits itself to looking on with fin-de-siècle tolerance.*]

THE HOSTESS [*turning genially to the Blood*] Well, are they going to send you down?

THE B. [*yawning*] What for?

THE H. [*somewhat surprised*] Why, for want-

## CHEZ BONA DEA

ing to keep a tandem. They met to-day to consider, didn't they?

THE B. [*coolly*] Oh, yes! They met to-day. [*Various members having gathered round full of interest*] There was a full-dress meeting of the Council. They sent for me and asked me whether I *really* proposed to keep a tandem. I said—yes—or else I——

THE H. [*blandly*] I'm sorry to interrupt, but [*addressing the girl nearest the bell*] Jones, will you ring for the scout?

[*A housemaid appears, brings more hot water, and then withdraws discreetly.*]

THE B. [*with philosophic irrelevance as the Abigail disappears*] That girl will have to get the sack. She doesn't know how to clean hunting boots.

THE H. [*smiling*] But do go on.

THE B. [*yawning again*] Where had I got to? Oh, yes—then they said they didn't know what I had come up here for. I said I didn't know either—which puzzled them. And the result? Well, I may drive my tandem if the S. P. [*which is, being interpreted, the Sub-Principal*] comes out with me!

[*There is a general laugh at this—which only those who know the Sub-Principal can duly appreciate.*]

THE H. [*eagerly*] When you next go out, do let us know?

THE B. [*calmly*] Oh, you'll have to wait a bit.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

The S. P. must see all the insurance societies first. Meanwhile [*with a flash of holy joy*] I have wired for a really skittish leader.

[*The circle breaks up reluctantly, but animated by eternal hope. Conversation henceforward is carried on mainly in pairs.*]

THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOCKEY CLUB [*to a would-be Oarswoman*] How's the Four going?

WOULD-BE OARSWOMAN [*who has found a convenient resting-place on the edge of the bed, where she can swing her feet airily*] So so!

C. H. C. [*smiling with conscious pity*] I don't believe you'll make anything of it. [*Decidedly*] You'd much better take to hockey. The best of hockey is [*this with the intense whisper of a provincial Lady Macbeth*] that you can pay off all your old scores so cheaply. I gave Miss Gossip yesterday a beauty on the shins. She won't break my "bike" again for some time. [*Persuasively*] Oh! yes! You'd much better give up rowing.

W.-B. O. [*waveringly, for is not the prospect tempting?*] Not just yet. We had a new coach to-day. I persuaded Mr. Stretcher to come and give us a lesson. It was no end of fun.

C. H. C. [*who as Captain of a nascent club has had some experience of male coaches*] Why? Did he curse and swear as the men do down at the river?

W.-B. O. [*laughing immoderately*] He curse and swear! He was far too frightened, poor thing! I longed to tell him to swear to ease his fright, but it would only have frightened him more. No; he sat in the stern like a mesmerised Sultan pulled along by his slaves; and got quite purple in the face when he tried to explain how to get "leg-drive," as he called it—and how——

HOSTESS [*interrupting sweetly*] There is no need to give us the Zolaesque details now, is there?

W.-B. O. [*good-humouredly*] You're as big a prude as he was. One would think we came up here simply to be nice young ladies, sit on high chairs, and work samplers.

HOSTESS [*not knowing how to answer this, evades it in the Scotch manner*] I thought someone was missing to-night. Where's Polly?

W.-B. O. [*with nonchalant sympathy*] Oh, she's coaching.

[*Before further explanations of this extraordinary conduct are forthcoming the door opens crisply, and the young lady in question enters. She is a splendid example of breezy British womanhood—the ideal incarnation of "the girl's girl!"*]

MISS P. [*flopping down into a low chair before the fire*] Make room for a child. [*To the girl who offers her coffee and cake*] Thank you; you're a duck. [*After a few silent minutes of*

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*absorbed solacement*] What a thing it is to be quite free from men!

SEVERAL VOICES [*reproachfully*] But why on earth do you coach after dinner? No one else does.

MISS P. [*gravely*] When you come to coach with Mr. Epicurus you will do the same. Before eight o'clock he is a peevish old bachelor—but after dinner he's awfully pleased with himself. He tells me stories—all the tit-bits of scandal, you know, and that's everything when you're studying Italian history.

A SERIOUS STUDENT [*mournfully*] There's nothing pays in the schools like scandal, and it's so nauseous.

MISS P. [*vigorously*] Not a bit of it—not when it's real crusted scandal; and Mr. Epicurus can make the most shocking scandal distinguished. You get hungrier for it every week.

THE HOSTESS [*glancing at the clock, which points to ten*] And have you been feeding on scandal all this time?

MISS P. [*with startling remorse*] Damson jam! I wish I had. Mr. Epicurus, I fancy, hadn't had his cigar to-night, and so he was donnish and prim. The fact is, the old fossils who run the Hall don't know men. [*Thoughtfully*] We should be much better taught if our coaches were allowed to smoke.

THE BLOOD [*approvingly*] Hear! hear!

MISS P. [*bitterly*] To-night he would talk of



nothing but constitutions—as if I cared a two-penny hairpin for any constitution but my own.

*[To relieve her feelings she kicks off her slippers, apparently to warm two dainty, silken-hosed feet—in reality to admire and let others admire their exquisite proportions.]*

A SERIOUS STUDENT *[engaged in the background in whispered conversation]* Then you'll let me have the notes to copy. I'll go next week, and then you can have mine.

SECOND DITTO *[equally serious]* Be sure you do, for he will finish on the Moral Criterion, and I want to know——

MISS P. *[jumping up]* Who's talking shop? Come, you aren't putting it on for the S. P., nor are you in trousers and at the Pioneers' Club—not yet! You must beg all our pardons.

*[To prove that Miss Polly was right notice may be taken of the conversation of two confidential friends in another corner.]*

FIRST CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND *[admiringly]* How ever did you manage it?

SECOND DITTO *[who is blessed with a face beaming with all the silky innocence of a Correggio cherub]* Well, my cousin Tom put me up to it. I went to the Principal with a long face, hinted at domestic calamities, and so got away. And as I danced till four, and came back with rims under my eyes, everyone thought I had been sitting up——



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

FIRST C. F. [*smiling enviously*] Sitting out, did you say?

SECOND C. F. [*with the sorrow of remembering happier things*] Yes, sitting out all night. [*Adding with a bewitching air of virginal penitence*] And really my family were much better for my going.

FIRST C. F. [*soothingly*] Of course they were. What were the men like?

SECOND C. F. [*somewhat surprised*] I really can't say. I only knew two. So I danced thirteen with one and fourteen with the other. [*Carelessly*] The floor was good enough.

FIRST C. F. [*sympathetically*] Yes, it's not very nice dancing with strange men. I don't like it either.

SECOND C. F. [*ponderingly*] I suppose they're nervous—they always hold one so badly, as if one wanted either to be tickled or squeezed.

AN AVERAGE GIRL STUDENT [*who has been restlessly roaming about, stopping inquisitively in front of a photo conspicuously posted on the mantelpiece*] Who's the fat Romeo, may I ask?

HOSTESS [*not without a fleeting blush*] He isn't fat, and he isn't a Romeo. He is an undergrad.

A. G. S. [*apologetically*] I beg your pardon.

HOSTESS [*a little huffily*] Oh, there's no mystery. He was in the O. U. D. S. last year as a brigand. I got to know him in the

## CHEZ BONA DEA

Radcliffe Camera. I found him there one afternoon regularly stuck, so I helped him to find some books in that idiotic catalogue.

A. G. S. [*after a thoughtful re-inspection of the photo*] I wonder they don't put *chaperones* in the Camera. I suppose they will some day.

HOSTESS [*laughing*] They will—when they give us the B.A. [*N.B.—This is the correct expression in these circles for what is known among men as "The Greek Kalends."*]

A. G. S. [*slowly*] I remember him now. What a comic brigand he was! He always slunk off the stage with his sword between his legs.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOCKEY CLUB [*suddenly aroused to animation*] Do you wish to keep your hair?

[*She indicates with a gesture of pity the hostess's clustering aureole à Rossetti.*]

HOSTESS [*much surprised*] But what has a comic brigand to do with my hair?

C. H. C. [*seriously*] Do you remember Hetty Syllogism?

SEVERAL VOICES [*at once*] Yes—yes—what of her?

C. H. C. [*gravely*] Well, she began with philanthropy in the Camera. And now she has gone to the bad entirely—married a Cambridge man, cut off her hair, and at this moment is teaching housekeeping at Holloway!

[*There follows an icy pause.*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

HOSTESS [*mockingly*] And the moral?

C. H. C. [*gravely*] There isn't one. It's a true story. But [*with concentrated impressiveness*] if you wish to keep your hair, don't go to the Camera. Leave that to the Newton Hall girls.

[*This little sermon has the effect of most sermons—that of inducing sleep; for The Blood remarks somnolently as the clock chimes eleven, I suppose we must go to bed.*]

CAPTAIN OF THE HOCKEY CLUB [*with drowsy merriment*] Unless we wish to have the S. P. descending on us like a wolf on the fold. [*She ambles forward, and remarks benignly*] And now, my dears, I can't have you making owls of yourselves.

A SERIOUS STUDENT [*very seriously*] Well, I'm off. I've a 9 o'clock lecture to-morrow at St. Theresa's, and that means leaving here at 8.30 sharp. [*Wearily*] If I were a man-Don, I wouldn't lecture at 9 o'clock for all the fees the Association would give me.

THE BLOOD [*smiling appreciatively*] Oh, yes you would—if it were a hunting morning!

[*The party prepares to break up, when suddenly Miss Polly, who has been quietly ruminating on the soothing vision of her feet toasting at the fire, springs up and electrifies her audience by demanding in Rhadamanthine tones, But*]

## CHEZ BONA DEA

what are we going to do with Miss Medulla?

THE BLOOD [*with a touch of sleepy hauteur*] What has Miss Medulla to do with us?

MISS P. [*vehemently*] Everything. Isn't she a disgrace to the Hall? She has holes in her stockings, a rat wouldn't look at her boots; she dresses like an old-clothes' woman, and she actually quoted to me the other day the saying of some *beastly* German Professor—Treitsch something—who said that the British were stupid enough to believe that the use of soap was a sign of progress and civilisation.

THE HOSTESS [*weakly*] But then she has a very distinguished face.

MISS P. [*with grim contempt*] The face of a dilapidated mediæval humbug. Do you know [*as a crushing climax*] that she brings home dead mice in her pocket from the laboratory? [*This astounding statement is received with such general incredulity that she adds*] It is quite true—I've seen them myself.

A GIRL STUDENT [*laughingly*] But she is some use; for do you remember when we put snakes in the pockets of the jackets of the men who thought they came out here to teach us tennis? They were her snakes.

MISS P. [*desperately*] True; but for the credit of the Hall we must do something.

[*An embarrassing silence falls on all, unexpectedly broken by an impulsive cry*]

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*from the Would-be Oarswoman, who, in the profundity of her meditations on the stupendous problem, has fallen up against the unfinished hat.*

W.-B. O. [*with feverish joy*] What! another new hat? [*To the happy owner*] I positively must see you in it. Bring the candles to the mirror, Polly.

[*The whole Guild speedily gathers round the not unwilling possessor, and in three minutes the fears of the Sub-Principal and the woes of Miss Medulla are forgotten in a mystifying babel of criticisms and suggestions. The curtain falls sleepily on the enchanted group, rapt in maiden meditation, fashion free, and utterly oblivious of the lapse of time.*

## X

# THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

SCENE - *The Home of the Immortals—The Nelson Club.*

TIME - *About 4 p.m., when tout le monde et sa mère are enjoying a brief hour of a lotus-eater's life in the finest street in Europe.*

OCCASION - *None in particular.*

The club rooms, as every aspiring undergrad knows, command the divine curve of "The High," whose undulating line of broken roofs and soaring spires at this moment is lapped in the orange glow of the setting sun. In the doorway various patient dogs await their masters in chained attention; above, in the windows of this Academic Olympus, recline, apparently careless of mankind, the Greater Gods of the athletic and social world (as anthropomorphosized, it may be remarked, as any Pagan deities), and look down on the eddying flood of men, women, and beasts, nodding, glancing, and bustling by.

AN AVERAGE MEMBER [*comfortably ensconced in the window-sill, remarking in tones of sublime surprise to the Club Cynic in the room, who is dozing over the "Pink 'un"*]  
Hullo! why there's Toady in a Leander tie!

THE CLUB CYNIC [*not in the least surprised*]  
Yes; there's been a fresh distribution of the



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

crushed strawberry, I suppose. The reward of merit, or else [*with careless malice*] the club has been hard up.

A. M. [*almost bitterly*] Toady's so pleased, he wants everyone to know he's succeeded at last.

C. C. [*equably*] He knows that seeing's believing. Perhaps he thinks they'll take it back again, as it's for hire. [*Tossing the "Pink 'un" on to the floor with a yawn, and strolling up to the window.*] Scotty! don't he look pleased! He's happy now he's got it—Pear's Soap is not in it.

ANOTHER AVERAGE MEMBER [*joining the group*] Look at his trousers tucked up—that's for those below to see his pink socks. The fact is, he's so delighted, he's ordered Leander pyjamas and sleeps in them.

C. C. [*showing his teeth pleasantly*] I see; he's one of the sleeping members.

[*Below, the blissful and unconscious Toady lounges past, and, having sufficiently exhibited himself on one side of the street, crosses over, and, with the impartiality of Mr. Turveydrop, dawdles back on the other side.*]

A DEVOTED ADMIRER [*from another window to equally devoted chum*] The new shop opposite is let, I believe. [*The Devoted Chum, buried in "The Sportsman," makes no answer, but merely grunts acquiescingly.*] It's to be a milliner's, you know.

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

DEVOTED CHUM [*starting*] Eh? what? [*The information being repeated.*] You're not rotting? Really? [*He proceeds to inspect the new premises with the liveliest prospective satisfaction.*] When are they going to open?

D. A. [*confidently and waggishly*] Oh! before term ends, of course.

D. C. [*there being no rose without its thorn*] H'm! [*adding, with the regret of a club secretary*] We shall have to double the subscription, for they'll double our rent now, you bet!

D. A. [*making a wry face*] It'll be worth it though. [*A slight commotion takes place below, which develops rapidly into a street scene.*]

A. M. [*somewhat bored*] What's up?

UNDERGRAD IRRECONCILABLE [*who is "agin all government"*] Nothing much. Our Dean, you know, has taken to biking, and he's just come a cropper over the tram-lines.

A. M. [*amazed*] Why, they're running him in.

A. A. M. [*with Dantean satisfaction*] Yes; he's spilt that stout female into the mud, and she's going to have his scalp.

A. M. [*urged by sex bias*] Rather rough luck, isn't it?

A. A. M. [*gleefully*] Not a bit of it. Serve him jolly well right. He'll have to lie low for a time, and give us a chance. [*Explanatorily*] He's been trying to drive the college like a girls' school. He'll be having us walk out two and two next.

[Needless to say, the Dean is not "run in."

*By picking up the numerous parcels of his irate antagonist he succeeds in pacifying her wrath, and is at length allowed to proceed homeward spattered with mud, and wheeling his distorted Humber amidst the outspoken sympathy of the newspaper-boys.*

[The door of the room at this point has opened to admit a genial young man, immaculately attired, and dowered with the complexion of David after his victory over Goliath.

AN INTELLECTUAL BLOOD [*gaily*] Hullo! Coxcombe, you here! I thought you never ventured out till after dark when the shops were closed.

LORD COXCOMBE [*flinging himself into an armchair, and surveying his exquisite brown boots*] I can't stand the Dinner in Hall. They give one too much to eat; so I've come to dine here presently.

I. B. [*coming brutally to the point*] But what about the Duns? Have you run the Blockade?

L. C. [*sniffing at the violets in his button-hole*] The Duns, bless 'em! [*With the laugh of Harold Skimpole when a boy*] I've done for them.

I. B. [*incredulously*] You've paid them?

L. C. [*whistling mockingly*] Paid 'em, bless your simple heart! What do you take me for? An English Peer, or a tradesman's son? No;

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

I've done what my sweet Paddy tenants do in such cases—I've issued a "No Rent" Manifesto.

I. B. [*admiringly*] And shot them?

L. C. [*laughing*] Not yet! You see, poor devils! I couldn't screw any more out of them, and they couldn't screw any more out of me, and I hadn't a governor to blackmail, so [*confidentially*] I've turned agitator and Tout. Nice boots, aren't they? [*raising them gracefully*] Only thirty bob a pair cash at Messrs. Soulless, in the Breadmarket. I can recommend them; quite cured my corns.

I. B. [*grinning*] Oh! that's the line, is it?

L. C. [*touching his friend's arm*] I don't think much of that tweed of yours [*with emphatic volubility*]; the only shop worth patronizing is Messrs. Credit and Interest. Have you seen their new hand-bill? Listen. "Lord Coxcombe writes: 'Gentlemen, I suffered from misfits for years; since I have used your non-shrinking Irish homespun I no longer am troubled with my former waist'—the latter spelt as waste, if you like it better—"You are at liberty to make what use you please of this letter.'"

I. B. [*at last breaking in*] All right, Coxy, you needn't spout any further. I quite understand.

L. C. [*smiling alluringly*] Anyway, you won't object [*producing a handsome cigarette-case*] to sampling a new brand—only eight and six the hundred at Messrs.—

I. B. [*cutting him short by taking one*] Thanks! I know the shop.

L. C. [*sighing reflectively through a cloud of fragrant smoke*] And my Coach actually told me to-day I was the biggest dolt he had ever tried to teach. It's a pity the vulgar are always such liars.

I. B. [*turning round to address a well-known Plunging Friend, who for some time past has been pacing up and down, with his hands nervously fixed in his trouser pockets*] What's the matter, Benjy? Are you taking "ekker," or got St. Vitus' dance?

PLUNGING FRIEND [*shortly*] Can't you see I'm waiting?

I. B. [*humorously*] And so are we—for you to be polite.

P. F. [*stopping a moment, and remarking jubilantly*] Fact is, in ten minutes I ought to be good for fifty quid—a regular juicy snip, straight from the stables.

L. C. [*reproachfully*] What a beastly selfish beggar you are, Benjy! You might have put me on to it. You know I'm hard up.

P. F. [*apologetically*] So I would have; but I only got it this morning. I had barely time to wire my last sovereign.

[*Ten feverish minutes pass, and then a waiter enters with the magic slip to put upon the telegram board. The P. F. snatches it from his hand—all wait*]



## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

*eagerly—and then his jubilant face suddenly falls.*

I. B. [*still more humorously*] A juicy snip? Drawn blood, eh?

P. F. [*crushing up, in his forgetful wrath, the club's telegram, and then dropping it disconsolately*] Great heavens! not even placed!

I. B. [*dryly*] There's been a mistake somewhere.

P. F. [*fiercely*] Oh! dry up, can't you? You wouldn't exactly grin if you had just come an almighty mucker. [*He drops into a chair gloomily.*] I'm cleaned out; I shall have to go down.

I. B. [*heartily*] Poot—toot—toot! Cheer up! You can always turn Tosher, and go to 'Varsity sermons; besides [*consolingly*], it isn't as if you weren't used to it. You've been through it before. You'll be all right when you've taken the taste out of your mouth.

[*He promptly rings, and orders two whiskeys and soda.*]

A LOUNGER [*eagerly from the window*] Hurry up, you chaps, if you don't want to miss a sight!

I. B. [*sipping his whiskey in masterly inaction*] Thanks; we don't want any more sights.

A. L. [*still more eagerly*] It's Miss Embonpoint—the largest natural waist in the smallest possible space—to be seen for nothing, too! You'd better hurry up!



I. B. [*groaning*] Oh! can't we keep the Eternal Petticoat out, even here?

[*However, the Plunger and other choice spirits have rushed to the window, and are craning their necks to enjoy the blest vision.*]

P. F. [*admiringly*] I'll swear it's a good half-inch smaller than it was yesterday; [*adding incorrigibly*] look here! I'll bet you five to one in half-crowns I'm right.

THE I. B. [*who has joined the group*] No go, Benjy! You can't bet on certainties. [*Philosophically, as Miss Embonpoint disappears behind a group of young Lady Students hurrying to a five o'clock Professorial Lecture*] There, by the way, you have the women of the future—they must always be cutting a figure in the world.

[*Meanwhile the dusk creeps on apace. The crowd below hardly diminishes in volume, and the confused hum of numerous voices is now hoarsely punctuated by the passionate cries of the newspaper boys. The club rooms steadily fill up, and crackle briskly with a sharp sputter of conversation. Among the new comers has stealthily entered a melancholy figure, who, with the world-worn air of Mephistopheles, has silently wound his way up to a post of vantage in the window.*]

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

A. M. [*testily*] Shut that window, Jerry, if you don't mind. I can't stand the infernal row of those boys.

JERRY [*lugubriously*] I will presently. [*He remains staring out absorbedly into the darkened street.*]

A. M. [*Persuasively*] There's nothing to see now, only shop girls going home. Shut it, there's a good chap.

J. [*Leaving the window and addressing him mysteriously*] If you want a rare good joke—just you come here.

[*Jerry is a noted practical joker; his gloomy invitations, therefore, are not to be lightly rejected. He now points down the street*] Do you see that archway? that's where the Bobbies come out, [*with a dreary chuckle*] but you wait.

[*On the faith of Jerry's assertion a little knot of members awaits as anxiously as ever enthusiastic astronomers do for the crisis in an eclipse. Presently from Christ Church the hour booms out, reverberating through the darkness; equally punctually the first of a line of majestic policemen appears in the archway. But mirable dictu—the first Bobby trips over an unseen obstacle, and bites the pavement, followed, of course, by the others behind him. The scene has all the refined unexpectedness of a Gilbert and Sullivan dénouement, and as such is vociferously appreciated by all eye-witnesses above and below.*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

J. [*in a chilling whisper*] Only a bit of cobbler's waxed thread across the entrance inside. Glad you chaps liked the show. Good night! I'm going to make myself scarce.

[*And he promptly vanishes as mysteriously as he had arrived.*]

[*After this it is not surprising that the short time till dinner falls somewhat flat. But, dinner comfortably over, the members once more show steadily increasing signs of animation, assisted by tobacco, coffee, and other liquids.*]

AN ATHLETE [*who rejoices in the frame of a model prize fighter*] Did you have a good time at Abingdon?

2ND DITTO [*carelessly*] Rather! The supper was excellent, and we wound up with a steeple-chase over the sheep pens in the Market. We got away, too, before the local police arrived to see all was fair and square.

1ST A. [*mockingly*] And, of course, you didn't meet the Proggins.

2ND A. [*joyfully*] The others didn't but I did. I ran into his arms after leaving the stables. So I pretended to be squiffy, and couldn't give my name. They took me to six colleges to see if they would own me, but they wouldn't; and they were just going to lodge me in the Police Office, when I gave 'em the slip and got off.

THE I. B. [*knocking out his pipe sceptically*] Come, why don't you try an older chestnut?

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

1ST A. [*huffily*] It's a fact. They thought I couldn't look after myself, and so weren't very particular.

I. B. [*humorously*] Whereas you are now very particular.

1ST A. [*shortly*] All right; say I'm a liar, and have done with it.

I. B. [*sweetly*] Oh, don't fret yourself. I only wish I had your luck. [*He rises and says generally*] Good night!

2ND A. [*anxious to keep the peace*] You're off to read, I suppose.

I. B. [*laughing*] Yes, a lesson. I'm going to help rag a Scotch Fresher, who imagines that because he's the blessed M.A. of a Univairrrsity he's got a right to wear whiskers you can trip over.

2ND A. [*regretfully looking at his watch*] Too late for me to come and help, worse luck. The Porter wouldn't let me in, I suppose.

I. B. [*laughing*] Thanks! but I don't fancy we need recruits. [*Explanatorily*] It isn't only his whiskers that he won't carve off; he will jaw philosophy piffle in Hall, and [*as a climax*], though a fresher, he refused to run with the Light Four.

2ND A. [*with sympathetic indignation*] What a cur!

I. B. [*emphatically*] He is; so we are going to give him a cold shampoo in his bath, and wash all that rot out of him. Good night!

[*He departs, whistling gaily. Not long afterwards the echoes of a lusty chorus*

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*undulate up the street, accompanied by an occasional smash of glass.*

A MEMBER [*running to the window*] Hullo! What's on?

THE MAN WHO ALWAYS KNOWS [*brightly*] That must be Tommy Tiddler. He's got a little party at the Chasuble, to celebrate his being ploughed in Smalls. [*More chorus follows, and also further smashing of glass.*] He wants to ensure getting through next time.

A. M. [*grinning*] It sounds as if he and his friends were getting through something else in the meanwhile.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS [*sapiently*] H'm! I expect our dear friend the Proprietor will want to know when they're going to sing "God save the Queen."

*[An interesting pause occurs, in which the well-known refrain, mingled also with "Auld Lang Syne," is wafted up in staccato yells.]*

ANOTHER MEMBER [*quietly*] They've sung it three times already. That's the fourth.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS [*appreciatively*] Tiddler's a loyal little beggar. There's nothing like beginning the Jubilee early.

*[The refrain continues, rising and falling for a few minutes, when suddenly it breaks off, and a cold silence falls on the street.]*

A. M. [*shutting down the window with a bang*] I thought so. The Proggins are not so loyal. Now they're so nicely engaged we may as well go home. [*And they do.*]

# XI

## A MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

SCENE - *The sunlit battlemented Front Quad of  
St. Theresa's.*

TIME - *A morning in May.*

Various undergrads, in picturesque undress and pipe in mouth, loiter about. A few, in gowns more or less torn, loaf outside their tutors' rooms or the lecture-halls, like bathers about to take a chilly plunge. From the open windows, gay with gorgeous flower-boxes, other undergrads survey the scenes, and chaff their friends below, while a babel of lecturers' voices from the lecture-rooms mixes with the more mundane chatter of the loiterers. A gentle but continuous stream of visitors, watched by the undergrads with the half-sleepy, half-contemptuous interest of the beasts at the Zoo, flows to and fro. In the Lodge, under the mediæval gateway, a sleek college dignitary keeps a sharp eye on the possible entrance of dogs, or the still more possible entrance of sightseers, ready to pay for history as conceived by Porters.

FAITHFUL BROTHER [*descending with mother  
and sisters from a hansom*] Here we are!  
[*hurriedly*] I say, Maud, you won't mind  
lending me your jacket to cover Fitz up in.  
Dogs, you know, are not admitted.

[*Before Maud can protest, the jacket de-  
signed for triumphs at Oxford is seized*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*to wrap up her brother's fox terrier. Mother and sister are then rushed through the Porch.*

PATIENT MOTHER [*trying to erect her eye-glasses, as she is dragged through the Gateway*] What a lovely Renaissance Portal!

F. B. [*painfully conscious that Fitz may bark at any moment*] Yes, isn't it? But you're a bit off there, mother, for the doorway is new. [*It isn't, of course; but mothers with architectural tastes cannot be allowed to precipitate unnecessary crises. The F. B. stops presently, with hypocritical reluctance, on the staircases to his rooms.*] I'm awfully sorry, but I can't show you round now; I must be off to lecture. [*He releases Fitz, who disappears.*] The Porter'll see you round, or, [*with triumphant thoughtfulness*] still better, here's a guide-book. [*He turns up the map.*] You are in the very centre of things now, and can't go wrong.

P. M. [*humbly*] Very well, dear; [*vaguely*] I daresay we shall manage somehow.

[*The F. B. hastily disappears to a friend's room of refuge, where he can smoke free of maternal control.*]

DISCONTENTED SISTER [*eyeing the map and her new jacket lavishly trimmed with Fitz' hairs*] Well, mother, I'm not going to budge a step. I shall go straight to Dick's rooms, and read a yellow-back till lunch. I didn't come down here to poke about these silly old musty ruins. [*She begins to ascend the stairs.*]

## MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

P. M. [*helplessly*] And what am I to do?

D. S. [*sweetly from over her shoulder*] Oh, suppose you inspect Dick's "bedder," and see if he sleeps in properly-aired sheets.

[*Submission being the modern mother's duty, this programme is promptly carried out.*

[*Among the casual visitors has entered an American pair of fiancés, on whom the Porter, with the insight innate in the inhabitant of an old country, descends greedily.*

AMERICAN MAN [*airily*] I guess this is St. Philip's.

PORTER [*haughtily*] No, it ain't; it's St. Theresa's.

A. M. [*not in the least impressed*] Oh, really now?

AMERICAN WOMAN [*reprovingly to her fiancé*] I calc'late we've barked up the wrong tree. [*Sharply*] That comes of hazing round without a guide.

A. M. [*taking a general view*] Anything to see here?

P. [*superciliously*] That depends on 'ow you look at it. I dessay you wouldn't find nothing here. [*Waving his hand*] There's a party just agoin' round, and you can go with them if you like.

[*He leaves them hurriedly to wrestle with a group who have entered with a guide. After some private wrangling, the guide*

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*pays blackmail for poaching on the Porter's preserves, and is allowed to proceed.*

A. M. [*resentfully*] Well, I guess we aren't going to be jumped by a Britisher like that, and be roped in with that lot.

A. W. [*decisively*] I'm not going to waste my time fooling round. If we don't get roped in, we're gone geese.

*[She vindicates the rights of American womanhood by marching off, and her fiancé follows meekly.]*

*[Somewhat later there straggles in from the right a large party of London East-enders, thoughtfully brought down to the University to have a day's dram-drinking in culture, with a view to making them more contented for the future with their lives as humble workers. They number about 150, and are in charge of a young Don who delivers spasmodic lectures to which no one listens, and two emaciated, spectacled undergrads who have undertaken in this way to solve the Social Problem.]*

YOUNG DON [*mounting some convenient stairs, and pointing to the grey, time-worn walls*] Gentlemen! ahem!—gentlemen!—this noble Quadrangle, I must tell you, was the work of a celebrated foreign architect of the thirteenth—

POLITICAL IRRECONCILABLE [*sotto voce to*

## MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

*his neighbour*] Bah! maide in Germany!  
Looks as if it was, all tumblin' to pieces!

[*This patriotic remark, spreading quickly, destroys all interest in the architecture, and the orator finds himself deserted. The crowd, led by the two undergrads, pours into the second Quad, where on the famous grass lawn two young Dons are quietly enjoying a morning game of tennis. The London sightseers gather round the game, full of interest.*

P. I. [*snorting fiercely*] 'Ullo! 'Ere we see 'em a-studyin'—eh? That's wot we're taxed for, I suppose! The bloomin' haristocrats plaiy tennis while we wot makes the wealth must work the 'ole bloomin' day.

LAODICEAN FRIEND [*clapping him on the back genially*] Oh! get along with yer politicks, Willium! Don't you go for to be ungrateful with yer belly full o' gooseberry tart and stewed rabbit—carn't ye be thankful?

I. P. [*gloomily*] I only arks for wot I lawfully earns. I don't want their stewed rabbit.

L. F. [*soothingly*] O' course not—not when ye've already 'ad more than yer fill. [*Pointing at the perspiring Dons*] Carn't yer see it's only a gaime got up to amuse us? [*As the crowd follows the play*] Go it, little 'un! Three to one on the little 'un!

AN IRREPRESSIBLE WIT [*smilingly*] That's the unemployed, at work on 'ard labour!

A RIVAL WIT [*beaming*] No, it hain't. Them's the loonatics—they've studied too much, poor critters!—that's wot they are; and [*warningly to I. P., still contemplating them with a jaundiced eye*] if ye don't taik care, Willium, that's wot you'll come to.

[*Meanwhile the party to which the American pair had attached themselves has been ushered into the Chapel, and they now stand in a bored and huddled group while the guide explains.*]

THE GUIDE [*prattling away with the customary incoherent fluency of the man paid by the hour*]. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a fine example of Pre-Reformation work, almost entirely new, as the Reformers in their righteous zeal very nearly destroyed the whole Chapel.

ÆSTHETIC EXTENSIONIST STUDENT [*indig-  
nantly*] What a shame!

PROTESTANT MATRON [*who is accompanied by a lank, ill-favoured Protestant daughter, eyeing the Chapel severely*] It might be an Italian Church! We want some more Reformers, I think. No wonder, if that is Oxford taste, we are all becoming Catholics!

GUIDE [*still more rapidly*] Behind the altar you will observe a Virgin. Visitors come from all parts to study this celebrated picture, and——

THE FUNNY MAN [*chuckling to the Extensionist Student*] But they don't come back again if they can help it!



## MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

A. E. S. [*perusing her manual*] Ruskin says no one should give less than ten minutes' silent thought to this incomparable work, which, etc. etc. [*Here follows a lurid quotation.*]

THE F. M. [*producing his watch*] Are you ready? Go! [*The serious stand round, and gaze vacantly, while the frivolous roam about, sit in the stalls, and try to find out who the prayer books belong to.*] Ten minutes gone—time up!

[*Everyone prepares to move on, much relieved.*]

THE GUIDE [*feeling that his functions are being usurped*] Don't forget to observe the light on the Virgin's face.

A. E. S. [*hunting in her manual*] I don't see anything about the light here. Really, these handbooks are very inaccurate.

[*She marks a huge hiatus in blue pencil on the offending page.*]

A. M. [*anxiously to his fiancée*] I hope you are having a good time.

A. W. [*rapturously*] I'm just giddy—I never was so stuck on anything before. I'm as happy as a clam at high water.

[*The Guide now drives his party peremptorily into the Great Library.*]

UP-TO-DATE YOUNG LADY [*Enthusiastically*] Oh, what a lovely floor for a dance!

[*Unconsciously she almost begins to revolve luxuriously.*]

SECOND DITTO [*observing the confiding dark nooks*] And what lovely holes to sit out



in ! [*Then sadly*] But isn't this rot ? If only there was a decent undergrad in the party !

THE GUIDE [*becoming more monotonous with each sentence*] The statue to the left is a contemporary portrait of the Founder Archbishop in an attitude of prayer and thankfulness—with his right hand he blesses, while with his left he——

A VERY PLAIN YOUNG WOMAN [*waving her pince-nez menacingly*] I assure you, my good man, you are quite mistaken—the statue is a clumsy, modern forgery !

[*Great sensation in the crowd, whose one hope now is that the Guide will show fight.*]

THE G. [*after an astonished glare*] I don't like to contradict a lady [*this with an unctuously polite smile, not lost on the feminine portion of the crowd*], but [*with crushing sarcasm*] perhaps you know more than Professor Cobwebs.

[*His air conveys that Professor Cobwebs is an intimate personal friend.*]

A. M. [*encouragingly to the young woman*] Don't you be jumped !

V. P. Y. W. [*assuming her pince-nez with a Medusa stare*] Oh, dear no ! But as Professor Cobwebs is my father, I can assure you he is quite wrong.

A. M. [*forgetting himself*] Brava ! you ought to belong to the States !

HIS FIANCÉE [*angrily in his ear*] Mr. Josiah P. Wilson, if you speak to that young person again, I shall go straight out—and that's flat.

## MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

THE G. [*playing his trump card*] I've no doubt then you will take my place.

V. P. Y. W. [*smiling icily*] With pleasure; and your fees too!

[*She proceeds to give a masterly lecture on the library, which effectually empties the room. As the visitors slink out, one by one, the American fiancée lingers.*]

A. F. [*trying surreptitiously to pick a piece of the Mosaic out of the wall*] I must have a chunk of that.

THE G. [*who knows the ways of American Tourists*] No! Madam, that is not allowed; but [*as her fiancé deftly oils his palm that he may make his peace with his destined bride*] bless you! I can't see you if I go out first.

[*The outrage is thus safely perpetrated.*]

[*In the second Quadrangle, which has now been deserted by the East-enders, there appear two honeymooning bicyclists, disgusted to find it so empty.*]

MALE BICYCLIST [*on tiptoe and peering into a ground-floor sitting-room*] 'Ere, Maria! just you come and look 'ere.

MARIA [*after vainly striving to increase her stumpy stature*] I can't see; I wonder if I fetched my bike and stood on that, I——

M. B. [*coolly*] Oh, I shouldn't bother to do that. There's a door; I'll open it, and you can see then. [*He opens the door, but is confronted by the undergrad owner, on whom the*

*preceding dialogue has not been lost*] Oh!  
[*shamefacedly*] I didn't know——

U. O. [*rubbing his hands, à Dick Swiveller*]  
Oh, don't apologise—not in the least necessary  
—it's only a private apartment. Pray make  
yourself at home.

M. B. [*who never can understand chaff*]  
But you——

U. O. [*loftily*] I—oh! don't consider me, I beg.  
[*Correcting himself humbly*] Pardon my rude-  
ness, I was forgetting—won't Maria come in too?

[*The Pair, however, have fled swifter even  
than their "bikes" would have taken them.*

[*In the Front Quad the Protestant Matron,  
with the lank Protesting Daughter, may  
be seen still unsatisfied.*

P. M. [*sweeping the Quad with her eyeglasses*]  
I don't see anybody to ask. [*Then spying an  
innocent undergrad*] Ah! there's an intelligent-  
looking young man!

[*She confronts him boldly. The innocent  
undergrad, seeing his chance, listens  
politely.*

P. M. [*having put him through his paces*]  
And do Lady Students actually come here to  
the men's lectures?

I. U. [*with the air of making a disagreeable  
confession*] Oh! rather. We all go in together,  
like the animals in the ark, two and two, male  
and female, you know, the sheep with the goats.

P. M. [*with painful recollections of the*

## MORNING WITH THE PHILISTINES

Chapel] Really! What is Oxford coming to? I suppose you couldn't show us a Lady Student.

I. U. [*with a wicked inspiration*] You're in luck. There is a typical Lady Student!

[*With the sobriety of Puck he points to a fashionably-dressed, dainty young woman—one of those divine, demure cousins, who come down to sweeten the lives of the toiling undergrad—sauntering out in confidential conversation with her humble adorer, and is rewarded by seeing the P. M. bristle visibly from head to foot.*

P. M. [*eyeing the unoffending pair with statuesque horror*] It is positively painful. [*Gasping, as the awful untruth slowly sinks into her matronly soul*] And is that allowed?

I. U. [*suppressing his feelings with an effort*] Allowed—oh! not exactly that—but it can't very well be stopped, you know. You see, liberty, equality, and fraternity [*this with a delicate pungency*] for the two sexes is the word nowadays.

P. M. [*as the pair disappear in ripples of flirtatious laughter*] We are much obliged to you. [*She gathers her skirts majestically, and then adds impressively to the lank, ill-favoured daughter*] How thankful I am that I never took your cousin Hypatia's advice, and sent you to College, to submit you to these terrible temptations! [*Without more ado she quits the unholy precincts, still echoing with the vernal merriment of lovers, echoes swelled by the convulsive guffaws of her innocent Cicerone.*

## XII

### THE EIGHTS

SCENE - *The barge of St. Theresa's.*

TIME - *About 4.15 p.m., i.e., just before  
the Second Division races.*

OCCASION - *The Summer Eights races.*

On the roof of the barge (as on that of the adjoining barges) a closely-packed, motley, but withal amiable crowd—elderly Dons and their wives; young Dons and their wives, chaperoning young ladies of kaleidoscopic attractions, but really requiring chaperones themselves; undergraduates of every type, from the “smug” to the “blood”; fathers, mothers, sisters, aunts, and, of course, cousins, from the truly rural, homely simple maiden, to “the cousin” who is a society belle or a lady student. The costumes of these all sorts and conditions of men and women are so various that they seem to be an epitome of the human mind in its dowdiest, as well as in its most ornamental phases.

MATERFAMILIAS [*panting, after climbing the stairs to the roof of the barge*] H'm! Those stairs are very trying. [*Looking round*] Is this what you call a barge, Freddy?

FREDDY [*irrelevantly*] No; I call it a squash, mother.

M. F. [*smiling fondly*] What spirits the



## THE EIGHTS

boy has ! [*She glares maternally at the Ewig weibliches around her*] Does *this* go on always ?

F. [*who is diplomatic, as well as dutiful*] Not exactly, mater ; only this one week, you know, else we should do no work.

[*F. suddenly takes off his hat to a handsome, piquantly-dressed young woman.*]

M. F. [*putting up her glasses*] Who is that, Freddy ?

F. [*smiling*] Only our Dean's best half. Don't be alarmed, mater.

M. F. [*relieved*] A Don's wife ! [*inspecting her severely*] She is very young for such a responsible position——

F. [*appreciatively*] That's quite good, mater. She *is* young, and jolly decent-looking. We call her Beauty, you know, and the Dean is—— [*He takes his hat off again.*] Who's that ? Oh ! we call that the Senior Tutor's Bundle, because——oh, because——[*he ends in a profane aposiopesis of laughter ; taking off his hat again, this time with his most irresistible smile*] Oh ! that's the sister of the Dean's wife ; she's a student at one of the Halls.

[*He refrains from comment on her appearance, which is above even undergraduate suspicion.*]

M. F. [*shortly*] I don't think young married women should——

F.'S SISTER [*breaking in sisterly*] Don't be silly, mother ; every woman—not even every



married woman—is not dying to flirt with Freddy.

M. F. [*closing her survey*] Well, I'm glad they aren't going to keep these young women students up here by giving them degrees. The Dons have some sense if the undergrads haven't.

F. [*who has been telepathing with the Sister of the Dean's wife*] One minute, mother; I must go and shake hands.

[*He filially leaves his mother and sister standing in the crowd, and can be seen making himself most agreeable to both Mrs. Dean and her sister.*]

F.'S SISTER [*after watching his politeness with disgust*] I must say Freddy is beastly. He might consider us a little. There he is flirting outrageously with that girl. Why couldn't he introduce us to somebody? [*She casts a pathetic glance at a good-looking undergrad hard by.*] He won't even get us chairs.

[*This last is addressed pointedly to the general public.*]

M. F. [*ruffled*] Don't be spiteful, Nora. You can't harry the poor boy to death. He can't make chairs if there aren't any——

N. [*viciously*] Perhaps not; but he can make tracks [*with another still more pathetic glance at her undergrad neighbour.*]

M. F. [*plaintively*] I can't think where you pick up all that slang, Nora.

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N. [*smiling sweetly*] From the dear boy, mother.

M. F. [*turning off at a tangent*] Remember, too, how good he has been already—giving up his lectures this morning, and treating us to salmon mayonnaise for lunch, and——

N. [*discontentedly*] Yes, but no chocolates. I hate salmon mayonnaise; they give you nothing else for lunch at Oxford, and it always makes me ill. Now, when we went last year to lunch with Mr. Philogynist, he gave us lovely chocolates.

M. F. [*not yet beaten*] But Freddy must be polite to his friends.

N. [*cuttingly*] He won't let anyone else though. [*She glances at the undergrad again, who takes the hint, and modestly offers to find chairs. He then lends Miss Nora his race card, and is rewarded by a gracious monosyllable or two and a very encouraging smile. The ice, of course, is speedily broken, and the undergrad promptly falls into the abyss.*]

F. [*presently, in a low voice*] I say, Nora, what on earth are you talking to that fellow for? He's the biggest bounder in college—an awful little cad!

N. [*with the innocence of the soft answer*] That is no reason why I should be rude to him, is it? Anyway, he had the politeness to get us chairs, and that is more than the gentlemen of the college did.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

F. [*wincing, and sulkily*] Oh, well, of course if you choose to make a spectacle of yourself — [*turning away in high dudgeon to find consolation by sporting in the shade of Amaryllis' parasol.*]

MALE COUSIN [*languidly*] What a bore! There's the five minutes' gun; they'll be here directly.

FEMALE COUSIN [*insinuatingly*] I thought you were going to bet me something on your boat.

[*She looks pensively at her well-gloved hand.*]

M. C. [*with male superiority*] So I shall. But Terry's—our boat, you know—doesn't row in the Second Division with all these crocks.

F. C. [*naïvely*] Is that the proper name for an eight?

M. C. [*patting his chest unconsciously*] Oh, come, you know what a crock is.

F. C. [*with what she imagines is her wickedest air*] You are not a crock, I think?

M. C. [*stroking his moustache*] Lord! I hope not. [*He turns the conversation speedily.*] Look here, I'll bet you three pairs that Jaggers don't make a bump. What size do you take?

[*He proceeds to examine her hand with unnecessary detail.*]

F. C. [*blushing as the operation demands*] But I can't bet you gloves, can I?

M. C. [*decisively*] Certainly not. [*With cousinly generosity*] Suppose you stake your rose—say that one [*touching the one nearest her chin.*]

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F. C. [*shyly*] Oh! I can't give you that one, because it was given me. [*The words are italicised by a coquettish look.*]

M. C. [*much hurt*] I beg your pardon! Of course I wouldn't deprive you of it for worlds.

F. C. [*sweetly*] I daresay mother would give you one too, if you asked her prettily—and if you come to the rectory to read with papa this summer, and there are any left, perhaps——

[*They both smile the smile of the fatuous future, and are only interrupted by the eager cry: There they are! Here they come!*]

[*A tornado of excitement swoops down on everybody. The front rows of visitors crane their necks in every direction but the right one; the back rows lean on the front rows in a mannerless endeavour to pierce the waving labyrinth of hats and parasols, or clamber on to the chairs pell mell. Even the bored paterfamilias are faintly fluttered, and tread on each other's toes unscrupulously. At first there is nothing to see but a clean stretch of grey-green river, lined with women-laden barges. Presently the boats, followed by a dense, perspiring mob, emerge from The Gut, and struggle into view, and so pass the spectators, with varying fortunes, amid feverish yells from the crowded bank, answered by more feverish yells from the barges, the delirious*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*splutter of rattles and pistols, sackbut, dulcimer, and all other kinds of undergraduate music. The floodgates are opened to a torrent of excited, skilled criticisms or insensate apostrophes.*

FIRST VOICE [*frantically*] They're spurting, by Gad! Aren't they tucking them in! Now they're shooting!

SECOND VOICE [*screaming*] They're washed off! Put your beef into it, you beggars!

THIRD VOICE [*gutturally*] Knifed them, by Jove! I knew those chaps couldn't last.

FOURTH VOICE. Five's a bad sight in that boat—mere luggage and a cruel bucket.

GUSHING YOUNG LADY [*effusively*] Oh! don't they look sweet?

PROFANE UNDERGRAD [*with the air of Nero surveying burning Rome*] That'll gruel them a bit. Aren't they cooked? Ah! that's where they call for their Pa's and Ma's.

MISS JULIET [*with a suppressed shriek as her chair rocks*] Oh, I know I shall fall!

MR. ROMEO [*consolingly*] No you won't. Just take my hand, and you'll be all right.

MISS J. [*demurely*] May I?

[*They clasp hands operatically, and continue to clasp fervently long after the race is over.*]

MR. R. Now you're almost safe.

[*He wonders whether he would be justified in offering delicate support to a very trim waist, and finally decides to do so, and risk the consequences.*]

## THE EIGHTS

EXQUISITE DECADENT [*pushing back his lank hair*] It makes one perspire to see them.

[*He leans in an Aubrey Beardsley attitude against the balustrade, and flicks his face delicately with a pale green silk handkerchief.*]

SHORT BUT SPORTING CHAPERONE [*who has gallantly mounted a rickety chair*] Oh, I'm over! No I'm not.

[*She clutches wildly, and knocks the hat of the Exquisite Decadent into the water; she then grabs him tightly by the shoulder, and so sees the race.*]

E. D. [*under his breath*] Clement Scott take that woman! upsetting my coat like that. [*Surveying the crease ruefully*] I shan't be able to wear it again, and it *did* harmonize with me.

[*He retires sorrowfully to find his dripping hat and restore his ruffled locks.*]

FIDUS ACHATES [*who is looking after his chum's people, i.e., his chum's sister*] There is Phil's crew [*pointing to a boat very hard pressed*].

ANXIOUS BUT PROUD MOTHER. Oh, where? where? [*She gapes wildly up and down, and presently espies her firstborn doing wonders at "6."*] Dear boy! I hope he won't tire himself too much.

PHIL'S SISTER [*critically*] Ought he to crook his back like that? He looks exactly like a dromedary.

PATERFAMILIAS [*grimly from the back-*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*ground*] I am glad there is *something* he does work at.

*[Phil catches a very bad crab, and his boat is promptly bumped.]*

HIS MOTHER [*indignantly, when the occurrence has been explained*] What a shame! How mean of them to take advantage of an accident! It is so like men. Anyone could see, too, he was quite exhausted.

F. A. [*carelessly*] Yes; and his heart is rather weak.

M. [*palpitatingly*] Phil's heart weak! He should never have rowed. I always said so. They oughtn't to permit such things. I shall certainly speak to the President about it.

F. A. [*tamely, not liking this development*] I meant sentimentally weak, not physically weak. [*Smiling at P.'s sister*] It's a very common complaint up here, due to the enervating Oxford air—and—[*looking her suggestively in the face*] the influence of the external environment.

*[P.'s mother is appeased, and frames a dual resolve—not to keep too close an eye on Fidus Achates, who is an eminently desirable young man, but certainly to watch P. more carefully.]*

FIRST OLD STAGER [*sententiously*] Rowing is not what it used to be in our days, eh?

SECOND DITTO [*still more sententiously*] None of those new-fangled dodges when you and I rowed head of the river. It was muscles

## THE EIGHTS

and grit, and not tricks then. Do you remember that night when?—

[*He meanders into the usual string of old-stager anecdotes.*]

[*The boats having passed, and the river being given over to a flotilla of punts and canoes, the crowd descends into the interior of the barge for tea, where a scene combining the pleasurable incidents of the Black Hole of Calcutta and the hour for feeding at the Zoo is vividly enacted.*]

FIRST COUSIN [*beaming*] Thank you; cream, please, and two lumps. [*With a tired smile*] I'm not High Church, and it's not Lent. [*In a low voice*] I don't think I can manage any more, Madge. This is the third tea I've eaten this afternoon.

MADGE [*briskly*] Oh, nonsense! Tom will be dreadfully disappointed if you don't eat a hearty tea: [*impressively*] you must. [*She carefully chooses the largest slice of cake, and adds sotto voce*]: As Corney Grain used to say, I am not hungry, but, thank Heaven, I am greedy!

CHARMING BUT INQUISITIVE YOUNG LADY [*with the persuasiveness of a lawyer handling a hostile witness*] You row? How delightful! You can tell me all about it. Now why are they called Bumps?

CAPTAIN OF THE BOATS [*feebly*] Oh! ah—because—er—well, they do bump, don't they?

I. Y. L. [*sceptically*] Do they? I thought

they only tried to. And a bump ought to hurt. Now, does it hurt you to be bumped?

C. B. [*still more feebly*] Oh! well—you know—in one sense——

I. Y. L. [*smiling serenely*] Only in one sense? Now when I am bumped I feel it in every sense.

[*End of the first round. The C. B. retires for restoration, but is presently lured back to his destruction.*]

I. Y. L. [*returning to the fray like a Naiad refreshed*] Now you must tell me all about the sandwich boat. It rows twice, doesn't it?

C. B. [*feeling on safer ground, lucidly*] Yes; it rows first in the second division that rows first, you know, and last in the first division that rows second.

I. Y. L. [*surveying him narrowly, to see that he isn't joking*] I see. But why does it row first of the—first division that rows—first, did you say? Oh, no, second? or is it second in the second that?—— [*She stops perplexed, and basely takes shelter in a flattering look.*]

C. B. [*carefully*] It is the connecting link, you know——

I. Y. L. The missing link, I think you mean.

C. B. [*ignoring the remark*] And so it has to row first in the second——

I. Y. L. [*repeating his words*] Yes; and [*triumphantly*—then it rows first in the first, doesn't it?

C. B. [*despairingly wiping his brow and*

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*glancing round like a hunted animal*] Oh, no; don't you see that if——

I. Y. L. [*counting on her fingers*] I see now; but there is no difference. Why should it row twice if it is in the same place?

*[Her tone suggests that he is on oath.]*

C. B. [*with the feeling that this way lies a betrothal*] But there is a difference; it is first in the second division, and——

I. Y. L. [*wildly*] And second in the first! You have made it beautifully clear. Thank you so much. [*She then proceeds to inflict his lucid explanation with entirely original emendations on a reluctant mother.*

*[Meanwhile the "Boats Parade" between the Two Divisions of the Races is taking place in the Broad Walk, and the exhausted visitors stroll up and down like convicts on a treadmill, admiring the buttercups, the hawthorn, and the Towers, and heartily wishing there wasn't so much to see in Oxford.]*

DANDY DON [*who has condescended to be seen in the company of a country cousin*] I suppose you would like to show yourself to the crowd?

*[They dawdle out into the human stream.]*

COUNTRY COUSIN [*enthusiastically*] What a pretty sight, and what lovely dresses!

D. D. [*after a masterly inspection*] Ah! it's only woman who is vile here, I fear. An amazingly poor show this year! I've rarely seen such a scratch lot of toilettes!

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

C. C. [*surprised*] Oh, do you think so? Now, there's a lovely frock.

D. D. [*mounting an eyeglass*] H'm. Three seasons old, at least. Bows at the back of the neck are as dead as Queen Anne. [*He is made aware of the fact that the C. C. is wearing a painfully large one by her stealthy effort to tuck it away under the collar of her jacket.*]

C. C. [*despondently*] Are they? [*Brightening*] But lots of girls are wearing them.

D. D. [*calmly*] Only the Oxford girls, who don't know any better. In Paris they are wearing Charles XII. collars—they'll get to Oxford by 1900, I suppose.

C. C. [*bewildered*] Charles XII. collars! Surely—oh! there's a nice dress, now—you'll admit that *that* is a nice dress.

D. D. [*more in sorrow than in contempt*] Odious! in crêpon 't would a saint provoke! It's only Mrs. Matchem. I never saw her worse dressed. She has surpassed herself.

C. C. [*much dejected*] But what is wrong with it?

D. D. [*contemptuously*] Everything. Her figure's wrong to begin with. Then look at the bodice [*with infinite pity*], and the skirt bunches—[*gravely*] I don't think we ought to look at her any longer.

[*C. C. returns to the barge a sadder and a wiser girl, and more impressed than ever with the learning of the University.*]

## THE EIGHTS

FIRST AVERAGE UNDERGRAD. Hallo, Jerry, you look very down in the mouth.

SECOND DITTO [*gloomily*] Well, I've just asked my cousin's cousin to tea, and she refused because she's going to tea instead with her cousin's cousin.

FIRST A. U. [*cheerily*] Never mind, you Juggins ; come to tea with me at my digs to-morrow. [*Dropping his voice*] I've got Dulcie Lightfoot and the *pas de quatre* of "The Frolicsome Firefly" teaing with me to-morrow, and——

SECOND A. U. [*admiringly*] You dawg ! oh, you dawg !

FIRST A. U. [*confidentially*] Don't tell anyone, but they've promised to dance after tea. Better fun than towing females to the Eights, eh ?

SECOND A. U. [*laughing appreciatively*] And you put your people off because you had schools on ?

FIRST A. U. [*quietly*] Ah ! bless the schools ! Besides, the Eights are not much catch when you can have Dulcie to tea. She's the only Eights visitor worth asking. It's an infernal pity the company's only down for three nights.

[*The two retire to arrange the programme in a Canadian canoe, while the remainder of the visitors return to the barges for a second instalment of the races. The previous scene with the requisite variations is then patiently repeated and as patiently endured.*]



## XIII

### THE WATER BABIES

SCENE - *Salter's Barge.*

TIME - *A perfect "Nuneham Tuesday,"  
about 11 a.m.*

OCCASION - *A water picnic.*

It being the summer term, and The Schools drawing near, everything wears an unblushing holiday air. In the background The Broad Walk (which has led so many to destruction); in the foreground the usual elements of an Oxford Picnic: the energetic Hostess, whose ambition is to be the *Madame Recamier* of a University Matrimonial Bureau; two or three carefully-selected married friends; a docile batch of young ladies in "shirts and skirts"; a tame Don or two; half a dozen undergrads in academic summer mufti; and a pair of young lady students, to supply the necessary (mental) ballast. Three or four boats constructed on the generous lines of the Ark, numerous hampers, and the inevitable terriers, complete this apparently Christian and Platonic Love-Feast.

ENERGETIC HOSTESS [*glancing at her watch, as she casts the strategic eye of a Moltke over her motley forces*] Are we all here? Let me see [*producing a list, and commencing to murmur the names.*]

ETERNAL WAG [*with the rollicking humour of "Soldiers Three"*] 'Tshun! 'Tshun! [To

## THE WATER BABIES

*the Undergrads inspecting the Lady Students with curious awe*] Eyes front there!

E. H. [*pausing to demand severely*] Where is Mr. Gadfly? I saw him here a minute ago. And where is Miss Lighthouse? [*A faint but knowing smile floats through the waiting groups, but no one replies. The E. H. turns to her staff-major, a red-haired, bullet-headed Mathematician, who studiously encourages everyone, including himself, to think he is very much in love with Mrs. Matchem.*] Mr. Parabola, will you have the goodness to find the missing young lady?

E. W. [*in a waggish aside*] H'm! she won't be missed very long at this rate; she'll be Mrs.——

[*But at this point he is forcibly suppressed by two long-suffering friends.*

[*Mr. P. unhesitatingly plunges into the bowels of the barge, and emerges with the errant couple, now blushing guiltily.*

MR. GADFLY [*airily*] So sorry, Mrs. Matchem; but we were looking for cushions, ye know.

E. W. [*unabashed*] H'm! always after something soft!

E. H. [*sweetly*] Do you generally look for my cushions where they keep the bilge water, Mr. Gadfly? [*She folds up her list, to signify that the incident is at an end, and hands it to her staff-major.*] Since we're all here now, perhaps you will arrange the boats, Mr. Parabola.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

E. W. [*audibly*] As you were ! only better !  
You may fall out now—with each other !

[*But arranging the boats is no easy matter.*

*Everyone offers suggestions ; everyone wants to avoid the boat with the hampers, and to be in the boats which will carry the Belle of the Picnic—a capricious Beauty, delicately employed by the Hostess as a Decoy Dove for the wild undergrads. A thousand ingenious diplomatic moves are made, and the scene is worthy of the Concert of The Powers in its most efficacious moments. Mr. Parabola, with the air of a Prussian staff-officer acting in a fit of aberration as a Tourists' Conductor runs about, mopping his bullet-head, patting resentful undergrads on the back, bullying the ladies, never in the way and never out of it.*

MR. P. [*decisively to a Brawny Blue lounging against the Barge*] You will row, of course.

BRAWNY BLUE [*to himself*] Not if I know it ! [*Lazily chewing a cigarette*] Delighted ; but fact is, the doctor has forbidden it. I've strained the muscles of my heart.

E. H. [*smiling sweetly, to conceal her chagrin*] Oh ! really ? I didn't know you had a heart.

B. B. [*blinking sleepily*] Ah ! that's too bad of you, Mrs. Matchem.

MRS. M. [*to herself*] The lazy glutton ! He's simply here for the strawberries, and he

## THE WATER BABIES

has a terrible appetite. [*Smiling still more sweetly*] Ah! then we must keep you quiet, I see [*and, to punish him, she promptly consigns him to the boat of the dowdies "who had to be asked," where he sleeps and sulks the rest of the day.*]

FASTIDIOUS UNDERGRAD [*on receiving his orders*] All right! [*Crossly to a friend*] Who the deuce is that red-haired smug?

EQUALLY FASTIDIOUS FRIEND [*genially*] Oh, he's always here. He thinks that because he once rowed in his second Togger and was bumped every night he can boss the show; but [*grimly*] I'll prove to him——

MR. P. [*Calling out from the boats*] Tomkins, will you kindly come and help Miss Myopia to steer?

[*Tomkins pauses, rebellion in his mien. All the young ladies gaze at him—there is a sharp pause, and then he meekly walks to his fate.*]

F. U. [*pleasantly, as he departs*] Don't forget to lick his boots, you Juggins.

MISS HYPATIA LANGUISH [*with a Viking's enthusiasm*] Oh, I should love to row stroke. I'm afraid I don't scull very well, in fact [*with rapturous candour*] I have never sculled before; but you'll forgive me, won't you?

PROSAIC DON [*calmly*] Oh, yes! If I am there to do it. [*Being an old picnic hand he is used to this sort of thing*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

MISS H. L. [*turning her face cherubically up to his*] Girls are stupid, aren't they? But one must begin some time. Show me how to hold my hands, please.

P. D. [*dryly*] I think Mr. Gadfly can do that better than I.

[*Mr. Gadfly takes the hint with avidity, and a four-handed duet begins—for the hands in sculling, as in other things, are the key to the situation.*

[*Meanwhile the Belle has carefully avoided finding a seat—a fact not lost on a pair of scheming Lotharios.*

FIRST LOTHARIO [*excitedly*] Just our luck! They'll never fit into those boats. I'll fetch my "Canader" and offer it Mrs. Matchem.

SECOND DITTO [*winking wickedly*] Do. It's a bargain. I'll take her [*with a jerk of the head*] down, and you up—see?

[*The First L. nods Mephistophelically. The canoe is fetched and about to be offered, when—*

THE BELLE [*quickly*] How sweet of you, Mrs. Matchem, to provide a canoe. I dote on canoes.

[*The Lotharios grin and nudge each other with ill-concealed delight.*

THE B. [*decisively*] If we don't make a start we shall be here all day. Mr. Greatheart, [*to a lean-faced young man at her elbow*] you will paddle me down, I am sure.

## THE WATER BABIES

*[Before the astounded conspirators can move the "Canader" is smilingly ravished from them, and five minutes later, huddled amongst the dowdies, they have a vision of a charming face framed in a lace-fringed parasol floating away to the Islands of the Blessed in their burnished canoe.]*

*[At last the expedition is under weigh. En route there are the usual incidents. For example—*

MISS MYOPIA *[whose boat has zig-zagged from bank to bank with womanly impartiality, sighing as the sculls grate for the fiftieth time]* Oh, I'm so sorry! *[Pouting feebly]* But it's really not my fault. The wretched thing will not keep straight.

UNDERGRADUATE MENTOR *[gravely]* Do you think we are all quite rightly balanced? *[Cheerfully]* Never mind, though, we are here to study the river scenery, you know.

A FEMININE FRIEND *[with tart amenity, as a hawthorn bough playfully knocks off her hat and brushes her hair]* Are we here to study botany also, I wonder?

*[Miss M. is driven to desperation and shoots wildly into mid-stream, where her track lies between a pleasure steamer and a crack Light Four rowing a course.]*

MISS M. *[piteously]* Oh, what am I to do?

*[She misses the paddles of the steamer by a yard or two, only to be greeted by blood-*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*thirsty cries from the bank—"Look ahead, sir! look ahead!" Miss M. tugs the rudder lines alternately; the cries redouble and then stop short in a grim "gr-r-r-r," curiously resembling suppressed oaths.*

FIRST OARSMAN [*endeavouring to be calm*]  
Can't you keep to the right side of the river, Madam? [*The undergrads in the picnic boat all look the other way.*

MISS M. [*pointing to her hand meekly but triumphantly*] But I am on the right side!

[*A fierce snort gurgles through the Light Four, but they pass in silence, though, to be sure, Miss M. hears behind her some asterisked remarks about women and lunatics going loose.*

HE [*in the canoe resting—with a Lotus-eater's look—on his paddles*] What a witch you are, Lily! I can't think how you have the face to do it.

SHE [*smiling*] It's because I have the face that I can do it. But take another chocolate, and give up thinking about me.

HE [*coolly*] As if you wanted me to do that!

SHE [*demurely*] Don't be silly. You know what I mean quite well.

[*Their eyes meet, and then he paddles on, for the river is a public place.*

[*In such wise Nuneham is finally reached. Mrs. Matchem and her staff-major*

## THE WATER BABIES

*promptly drive their party with the skill of Arab slavers to the scene of the coming collation.*

MRS. M. [*sternly*] Now no exploring until after lunch. Mr. Gadfly, you can fetch the cushions—this time by yourself. [*Addressing a group of would-be rebels*] Anyone who disobeys will do double washing-up duty.

[*The threat is amply sufficient—not a man stirs, while the ladies, on Oriental principles of the division of labour, are already hard at work unpacking for their lords and masters. The cloth, of course, is laid on the most unsuitable spot—a slope inhabited by ants, and garnished with decaying tree-trunks. Presently everyone squats round it, so as to form an ultra-Walter Crane border, combining a maximum of discomfort with a minimum of grace. As is usual at picnics, the stringency of the position seems to cause a corresponding freedom in the conversation.*]

MISS H. L. [*enthusiastically waving her tumbler*] Isn't this sweet?

P. D. [*sipping the champagne cup, critically*] If you refer to the liquid, it certainly is, very.

MISS H. L. [*indignantly*] How can you be so material, when you know the scene is just idyllic? Now wouldn't you always like to eat out of doors?

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

P. D. [*surveying a sandwich that has suffered, dubiously*] I should agree cordially did I [*with Celtic melancholy*] not, like the Irishman, prefer my bread and butter bald.

MISS H. L. [*turning for comfort to Mr. Gadfly*] Oh, my poor thumbs!—those horrid sculls! Would you be so kind as to cut up my food for me?

MR. G. [*with alacrity*] Rather. I'll feed you, too, if you wish.

MISS H. L. [*with large-eyed sauciness*] Ah! who is the baby now?

[*Naturally such a splendid opportunity for infantile dialectics is not lost.*]

SHY FRESHMAN [*anxious to be agreeable, and to forget that hidden tree-stumps can be sharp*] It's funny, isn't it, how every attitude but the one you take is comfortable and graceful?

BELLE OF THE PICNIC [*dryly*] Perhaps it's funny. I am afraid, however, I don't see the humour.

S. F. [*wishing he hadn't spoken*] Well, you know, I meant that you could be so much more graceful if—that is to say, it would be nicer——

[*In his agony to extricate himself from the acuteness of the dilemma and the tree-stump, he thrusts his foot into a chocolate cream destined for the second course.*]

ETERNAL WAG [*gaily*] All right, old chap, look out! You want polish, perhaps, but that

## THE WATER BABIES

wasn't put there for your brown boots, you know. [*Immensely delighted with his sally, the E. W. turns to the young lady on his right.*] I'm going to have some fun. As you stole a double share of strawberries for me, I'll give you the tip. [*He waits until the company are wrestling by the light of nature with the chicken bones, and cries out*] I say, look pleasant all of you! [*Everyone starts; an ominous click from a hand-camera catches them in the horrid act, and the bones are there for ever.*] Thanks, awfully! Just in time! [*Aside, with malicious joy*] Didn't give 'em time to answer! They'll do that presently in the negative—he! he! [*Aloud*] Bones of contention—eh, Mrs. Matchem? [*Comfortingly*] It's sure to be a good photo. I've a mind to send it to the *Sketch* or *Pick-me-up*.

[*This little event quite destroys the appetite of everyone but the Brawny Blue and the Prosaic Don, both of whom feel with regard to Mrs. Matchem's limited ideas of male hunger that it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. When they have at length finished, Mrs. M. rises briskly.*

MRS. M. [*soothingly*] The gentlemen had better draw lots as to who washes up—that's fair, isn't it? [*No one daring to contradict, the lots are drawn in gloomy silence. Needless to say, under the management of Mr. Parabola, they fall on the Prosaic Don and the Brawny*

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*Blue.* Mrs. M. smiles approvingly, and adds consolingly] You needn't hurry. We shan't start till five o'clock. And now the rest of us can explore.

[*She promptly sets the example by marching off with Mr. Parabola, whose red hair glistens joyfully in the sun over the reward he has worked so hard for. The others slowly pair off, more or less inappropriately, and disappear amongst the trees and ferns.*

BRAWNY BLUE [*gloomily facing the litter of dishes*] This is average thin. What do you say to tossing up again?

PROSAIC DON [*still picking amongst the refuse of the strawberries*] No need to do that. Wait till they're all out of sight, then we'll give the man at the cottage a shilling to wash up for us, and we can smoke. I've some first-rate cigars.

B. B. [*reflectively, after a pause*] I suppose that's Mrs. Matchem's way of getting it done.

P. D. [*lighting up*] Of course. Why should she pay when we can do it for her? Would you?

B. B. [*stretching himself*] No.

[*They both settle down to a narcotic snooze.*

[*The return journey calls for no comment.*

*Everyone is tired, everyone is cross—yet everyone persists in maintaining that they have never spent a pleasanter day, and why should we disbelieve them?*



#### XIV

### THE ACADEMIC SATURNALIA

SCENE - - *The exterior of the Sheldonian Theatre.*

TIME - - *About 10 a.m.*

OCCASION - *The Encaenia.*

At the several doors there has already collected a striving crowd composed mainly of patient chaperones, sisters and cousins, tempered by an agreeable sprinkling of impatient Undergraduates. The younger members of this waiting throng wear a somewhat haggard air, eloquent of Terpsichorean revels "in the wee hours ayont the twal"; but on the part of the ladies, their interesting pallor is refreshingly heightened by the vernal freshness of their dresses, the piquant impudence of their parasols, and the "unlimited trimmings" of their hats.

FIRST DUTIFUL UNDERGRAD [*addressing his exhausted neighbour*] The early bird finds the worm. You're looking a bit "chippy," old chap.

SECOND DITTO [*yawning portentously*] I'm feeling very much "off," and so would you if you'd been dancing till six, photographed till seven, and had "brekker" at eight.

FIRST D. U. [*comfortably*] Ah! that's where being engaged comes in. You can let the Future Blessing go to dances by herself



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

without fear of a broken heart. But what are you doing here? You said you weren't coming.

SECOND D. U. [*pathetically*] So I thought, and I told my aunt there were no tickets to be had. But hang me! if she didn't get at the Dean last night, and [*yawning like Jonah's whale*] they rooted me out this morning just as I was going to bed. That's feminine gratitude!

FIRST D. U. [*cheerfully*] You can always return good for evil by giving 'em the slip in a crowd like this.

SECOND D. U. [*winking sleepily*] Sh! Sh! [*hurriedly*] They'll hear you, you fool!

PORTLY AUNT [*He is right. A watchful and portly aunt who does not intend to be without male support intervenes sweetly*] Harry, dear, I'll take your arm, if you don't mind. I never know when I may faint in these crushes.

[*She does not collapse, and has no intention of doing so, but she uses his arm as if her existence was one long faint.*]

A YOUTHFUL CHAPERONE [*whose nodding hat gives her an air of most unmatronly juvenility*] You're very glum, Cyril. You have been dancing too much.

CYRIL [*gloomily and mysteriously*] I wish to heaven I had.

Y. C. [*surveying the situation*] What do you mean? [*Her survey suggests the clue*] Why, where is Netta?

CYRIL [*peevishly*] Oh! in front somewhere, I suppose. Somebody else has got her in charge.

## THE ACADEMIC SATURNALIA

Y. C. Somebody else? [*Searchingly*] Cyril, what have you been doing?

C. [*Endeavouring to meet her gaze unconcernedly*] I? Nothing.

Y. C. I beg your pardon. I meant what has she been doing?

C. [*sheepishly and with an effort*] Well, if you must know, the fact is Netta last night was played out, and . . . I found her asleep in the College Gardens at two o'clock this morning . . . and she has been cross with me ever since.

Y. C. [*highly amused*] Oh, fie! Cyril! You heartless creature to waken her!

C. [*with virtuous surprise*] Why, what else could I do?

Y. C. [*an unworthy suspicion stealing over her*] Yes, yes; but [*delicately, and with matronly dignity*] but I hope . . . in the proper way, you stupid boy?

C. [*blushing violently, as he presently grasps the full import of the question*] No, no—not that, of course I wouldn't dare. [*Laughing shamefacedly*] 'Pon my word, I wouldn't have thought it, even of you, May!

Y. C. That accounts for it. [*Severely*] You ought to be ashamed of yourself. No wonder she is in somebody else's charge. She ought to be.

C. [*remorsefully*] Well, I can't help it now.

Y. C. [*thoughtfully*] Perhaps not, but—er—couldn't you reverse the test to-night?

C. [*with a throb of joy*] By Jove! I will.

'Pon my word, I will. [*Then struck with a sudden fear*] But, May, do you really think it will be all right? Do you think she——

Y. C. [*smiling the smile of the matchmaker*] Try it, and see!

C. [*after reflection*] Well, you're a woman, and married; you ought to know.

[*To this there is no answer, for it is an inference that no young and pretty matron is ever disposed to dispute.*]

UNE BELLE AMERICAINE [*arriving on the outskirts of the crowd in charge of a gallant but pygmy Lothario*] My word! it's no slouch of a crowd for size. I guess we shall never get through, and I'm just sick to see the show.

PYGMY LOTHARIO [*gazing gallantly upwards*] I'm sorry I'm so small; but I think I can arrange for you.

[*He explains the situation briefly to a Herculean and already interested athlete.*]

HERCULEAN ATHLETE [*after a reassuring study of the lady*] If you'll trust yourself to me I'll undertake to work you through.

B. A. [*delightedly*] That's bully [*which is not intended as a hint for future action. The H. A., however, takes it as such.*]

H. A. [*promptly and politely addressing the neighbouring ladies*] Pardon me, madam, but would you kindly allow me to join my friends in front? I have their tickets, and I fear . . . .  
ah! thanks! [*By this Machiavellian manœuvre he makes up at least four rows.*]

## THE ACADEMIC SATURNALIA

B. A. [*still more delightedly*] You're splendid. You know how to give them their walking tickets.

H. A. [*modestly*] It won't work twice though, I'm afraid. The rest must be pure shove. [*Familiarity breeding a whispering confidence*] Now, if I might put my arm behind you [*supplying an eloquent context by a diffident and euphemistic gesture*] we should do much better, I'm sure.

B. A. [*smiling happily*] Oh, you needn't be shy. Surely you may do here what you do in a ball-room. [*And yet they say woman has no sense of logic!*]

H. A. [*acting with alacrity on the permission*] It will keep off the pressure of public opinion, anyway.

B. A. [*later, as they emerge triumphantly into the front row of the undergraduates' gallery*] You're a lovely man!

[*The H. A. indulges in a feeble tu quoque with the result that still later, to the chagrin of the patriotic papers of both nations, another American heiress decides to stay on this side of the water.*]

[*After an hour or so of sunburnt waiting, the doors are opened and the crowd takes possession. In an indescribably short time the Sheldonian is crammed to overflowing, save for the seats in the semi-circle reserved for the notabilities male and female, academic and otherwise.*]

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

A MISOGYNIST OXONIAN [*bitterly surveying the theatre almost entirely in possession of the predominant sex*] It's occasions like these that make one understand why your people voted *non-placet* at Cambridge.

HIS FRIEND [*severely jammed between two ponderous chaperones and three angular young lady students*] I suppose so—I voted the other way myself, by the way—still I must admit, the ladies as usual, here as elsewhere, don't leave their advocates a leg to stand on.

[*Yet even this touchingly true remark has no mitigating effect on his unhappy position.*

[*Meanwhile the crowd having a clear hour to while away amuses itself by remarks of a venomously libellous character, characterised rather by robustness of phrase than humour of idea, and compared with which the infamous Greek dramatic criticism "from the waggon" must have been innocent pleasantry. For example :*

FIRST VOICE [*as a very stout M.A. pushes consequentially into the crowded area*] Make room for the Tichborne claimant ! Don't be shy, sir ; up here we're very glad to see you, though they aren't down below. There is always room for a little one.

[*Roars of laughter, which cause the M.A. to turn an apoplectic purple.*



## THE ACADEMIC SATURNALIA

SECOND VOICE. You mustn't blush like that, sir—there are ladies present.

THIRD VOICE [*from the packed gallery*] 'Igher up, there! [*With a raucous imitation of the bus conductor*] Any lydy oblige a gentleman by going outsaide? [*Much laughter.*]

FOURTH VOICE [*to the organist, whose mirror is painfully conspicuous*] We can see you, sir, and when you've done with that looking-glass kindly pass it round. There are lady students who want it badly—[*the rest of the sentence is drowned in a torrent of ecstatic cheering.*]

FIFTH VOICE [*also to the organist, who is endeavouring to divert attention by toiling through a thoughtlessly selected classical programme*] Thank you, sir; when you've finished tuning the instrument, perhaps you'll play something.

[*The organist wisely takes the hint, and changes a Bach Fugue for the latest comic song, which is taken up with delirious fervour. The hour is thus noisily passed in rollicking choruses, punctuated by irrelevant cheering for such original subjects as "The Queen," "The Jubilee," "The Varsity" and "The Ladies." At last, at twelve o'clock, the big doors are thrown open, and the University Procession, headed by "The Pokers," and including a hardened Vice-*



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*Chancellor, extremely nervous Hon. D.C.L.'s, and the "brutal and bloody Proctors," in all the peacock's glory of full academic dress, solemnly files in. The criticisms redouble in sonorous stupidity.*

A VOICE. What price second-hand dressing gowns?

ANOTHER VOICE [*apropos of a Latin speech*] Shut up, sir! we know where you cribbed it.

ANOTHER VOICE [*from the gallery, in a pathetic yelp at the Public Orator's most purple period*] Oh, Lord! I'm cut in two! [*And so on, ad nauseam.*]

[*After the mendacious eulogies and the commonplace introduction of the new D.C.L.'s, the prize compositions are recited amidst increasing protests.*]

THE NEWDIGATE POET [*a colossal material undergrad with the moustaches of a Ouida Guardsman, fervently concluding*] "And the sun went down."

A VOICE [*interrupting anxiously*] Did you say, sir, you had had a son sent down?

[*Rapt cheering, during which the imperial moustaches are analysed by a hundred opera glasses, and the poet assumes an appropriately rich sunset glow.*]

FLIGHTY COUSIN [*as the Proctors are once more hailed with a storm of booing and hissing*] What nice flirtable young men!

UNDERGRADUATE ATTENDANT [*stopping in*

## THE ACADEMIC SATURNALIA

*his demonstration much surprised*] What ! those ! The Proggins !

F. C. [*naïvely*] But why are the Proctors so unpopular ?

U. A. Why ? [*Amazed*] Oh, because—because they are such beasts [*vigorously*] Booh ! Booh !

F. C. [*innocently*] Are they ?

U. A. [*conclusively*] Well, don't they look it ? Booh ! Booh !

A NEW WOMAN [*in the intervals of the comments on the prize compositions*] And it is these worn-out examples of pseudo-chivalry who pretend to defend women against themselves.

A MERE M.A. [*humbly*] You mistake me. I am entirely with you.

N. W. You really are in favour of—

M. M.A. [*quickly*] Why certainly. It is time men had their rights.

N. W. [*mystified*] Men ! Their rights ?

M. M.A. [*suavely*] Yes ; we men are pining for the feminine millennium. We shall then have the annual opportunity of saying publicly what we really think of our lady friends. Up till now we have, as you remarked, been the victims of pseudo-chivalry ; but, please the pigs, there's a good time coming.

[*Unluckily the Prize Compositions begin again, so that the N. W. has no chance of showing what real chivalry is. Around*

*her the uproar continues to increase until from sheer exhaustion the ceremony arrives at its wished-for end. The crowd breaks up rapidly to indulge in the time-honoured pastime of "hunt the chaperone."*

AN OXFORD HOSTESS [*meeting her protégée again on the stairs*] Ah, there you are! I hope you enjoyed it.

YOUNG LADY [*with unmistakable sincerity*] Immensely. [*The male convoy lurking behind grins appreciatively.*]

O. H. I was fearing that away up in that corner you might be bored.

Y. L. Bored! Not a bit. We couldn't see very much; but [*with a curious change of subject*] I could hear, you know——

O. H. [*helping her out generously*] All you wanted to.

Y. L. [*blushing*] Yes. [*Endeavouring to turn the conversation*] Weren't the men fun?

O. H. Yes. It is surprising how the undergrads instinctively know the right thing to say on these occasions. [*With malicious suddenness*] Perhaps you don't think so?

Y. L. [*confused*] I haven't much experience; but judging from to-day I should certainly agree.

*[An opinion which remained unshaken even by The All Souls Lunch, to which, in common with certain portions of the audience, she had been invited.]*

XV

THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

SCENE - *The historic ground at Lord's.*

TIME - *Mid-day.*

OCCASION - *The Inter-University Match.*

A broilingly brilliant day on which the sun shines with impartial fervour on a crowd composed of the intellectual, social, and athletic cream of the Empire. The ground is filled to overflowing with the customary items: old University men—peers, judges, M.P.'s, Q.C.'s, editors, journalists; young University men—Blues, Bloods, and Smugs; numerous individuals who for the three days fancy that they have been or are at Oxford or Cambridge; schoolboys of every age (trying to identify the field); the usual cricket loafers, cricket critics, picknickers in every kind of carriage; and last, but not least, the ladies—from Duchesses and the wives of Heads of Houses, to milliners and ladies' maids present to view their handiwork. Dress—for the men, the perennial monotony of frock coats and tall hats (varied by an occasional cummerbund and straw hat); for the ladies—*quot feminae tot toilettes.*

[*Inside the ground the standing audience ranks five deep, while countless unhappy dons and undergrads patrol the shilling area trying to find shade, or in the last resort a seat on the scanty green benches blistered by the sun. Everywhere meet-*

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*ings and greetings are going on, tempered by flashes of interest in the cricket, to the accompaniment of the discordant cries of match-card boys, a fatuous babel of irrelevant conversation, and spasmodic sputters of applause.*

FIRST AVERAGE UNDERGRAD [*meeting a Long Gone Down Chum*] Hullo, Soapy! Who'd have thought of seeing you here?

LONG GONE DOWN CHUM [*as facetiously as a very high collar will allow*] Teddy, by Gad! You don't seem particularly pleased.

FIRST A. U. [*linking arms*] I accept the inevitable, of course. But I thought you were at the Bar.

L. G. D. C. [*demurely*] So I am—that is to say, I have been there already this morning—and am just going there again. [*A sudden roar goes up.*] Hullo! Billy out—I for 10 is a really sprightly start—and bowled by a long hop, too!

[*Their talk is interrupted by the swooping down of several other friends; a delirious ten minutes ensues, in which each member of the group talks at once.*]

FIRST A. U. [*presently*] Look here, you chaps! Just listen to me a second. We dine at Jimmie's, 7.30 sharp.

L. G. D. C. [*with dismay*] And please *not* the Empire to follow. I've seen it so often already.

FIRST A. U. [*severely*] You forget, Soapy,



## THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

that we are not all gay dawgs at the Bar.  
Besides, I can promise you, you shan't see  
much of the show.

L. G. D. C. [*nodding*] I see—the Varsity  
innings is to be continued in the Promenade!

CHORUS OF FRIENDS [*with vigour*] Rather!  
And we shan't close the innings till we are all  
turned out—you bet!

[*They break up to repeat their meetings and  
invitations wholesale in different parts of  
the ground.*]

FIRST GAY DON [*meeting brother ditto*]  
What a nuisance you are! [*Crossly*] I have  
been trying to avoid you all the morning, and  
you turn up at every step.

BROTHER DITTO [*equally crossly*] It's not my  
fault. You might be a pupil, you appear in so  
many awkward places. Can't you remember  
that at Lord's dons should neither be seen nor  
heard?

FIRST G. D. [*crushingly*] Then I should  
pawn that waistcoat. I wouldn't be seen dead  
in a gutter with it on. [*Eagerly*] Tell me  
what you are going to do, and I shall know how  
to get out of your way.

B. D. [*pleasantly*] Well, I am going to  
wheedle some lunch from Mrs. Circe—she is  
here, I see. I prefer her strawberries and  
gooseberry wine to shandygaff and the tenth of  
a barmaid's smile in the buffet.

FIRST G. D. H'm! very questionable taste.



The old mythology up to date, I suppose. You are going to make a beast of yourself *chez* Madame Circe. Well, good-bye; I hope you will enjoy your grovel. I prefer higher game. Mrs. Circe is all very well in Oxford, but in the Macrocosm of Lord's she is the veriest bacillus of a social butterfly. I am trying to raise an invite for a Henley house-boat. At the same time, I do think when you are in town you might at least leave Norham Gardens alone and rise to the level of Cromwell Road. Bye-bye!

[*They part.*] *The Second Don stalks Mrs. Circe's carriage—an obviously hired one—and gently insinuates himself into the small crowd of thirty courtiers who, remembering the fleshpots of Oxford, are content to endure boredom and heat for the same reason that Timothy was recommended to take wine.*

SECOND G. D. [*with deliberate but emphatic fluency*]: How d'ye do, Mrs. Circe? [*Skilfully parrying the question in her eye*] Yes, I stayed up for Commem; I didn't go to any dances, I was at the All Souls lunch. I'm going to be here all three days. I am not coming to the Eton match, but I am going to Henley, and I am not going to Switzerland. Now we can talk, can't we?

MRS. CIRCE [*extending two fingers*]: Can we? There is only the weather left. Don't

## THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

ask me to shake hands ; I want one hand for my parasol and the other for my fan. [*Smiling*]  
It is hot, isn't it ?

SECOND G. D. [*wearily*] Yes ; it is hot. I imagine that if Nebuchadnezzar had lived to-day he wouldn't have put—er—those—  
[*pauses*]

MRS. C. [*helping him out*] Johnnies ?

SECOND G. D. Thank you—those Johnnies into the furnace ; he would have borrowed a shilling and sent them to Lord's.

MRS. C. [*eyeing him with critical favour*]  
But you don't look a bit hot.

SECOND G. D. [*delicately*] How could I, when you give me such a chilling reception ?

[*This remark produces the required effect.*

Mrs. C. smiles meaningly to the infinite disgust of the other courtiers.

MRS. C. [*graciously*] If you care to wait you shall have lunch, [*whispering*] and after lunch a seat in the carriage. We can't let you in before, because the girls have new white frocks on, and they mustn't be crushed. After the lunch parade it doesn't matter ; does it, girls ? [*The girls look everything that young ladies who are being paid for should.*] And then you will have to take up as little room as possible.

SECOND G. D. [*with gallant humility*] I promise. You know [*with his suavest smile*] I always feel desirably small in your society !

POLICEMAN [*patrolling the ropes, gruffly*]  
Keep back there! Keep back, gentlemen!

STRAW-HATTED YOUTH [*imitating his voice*]  
Move on, Robert. Keep moving on, please.  
Tickets for the Lord Chamberlain's office on  
the right.

P. [*more sharply*] You hain't got no right on  
the grass. You must keep off the grass.

[*No one moves. The P. turns on the straw-hatted youth and tries to evict him.*]

S. H. Y. [*humorously*] Who are you a-shovin'  
of? We aren't on the grass. You don't call  
this 'ere grass [*kicks with his heel at the burnt-up turf. The tall-hatted crowd smile; the straw hats guffaw.*] Keep off the grass yourself, Robert.

P. [*very shortly*] Now then, none of your  
soss!

SECOND S. H. Y. [*from a safe background*]  
Don't go for to spoil his lunch, Mike. Carn't  
yer see 'e 'as bought the ground, and 'e warnts  
to have a feed? Wot a 'ealthy happetite for  
breakfast the poor millionare 'ad! [*Points to  
the few remaining blades of grass left*] 'E  
hain't left much of a snack for his dinner.

[*The crowd is dissolved in Homeric  
laughter. The P. fiercely ejects an innocent schoolboy, and promptly beats a  
retreat.*]

[*The lunch parade now takes place, and the  
sluices are opened to the multitudinous*]

## THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

seas incarnadine. For three-quarters of an hour the ground is a combined "tableaux vivant" and cinematographic spectacle. After the meal in the Pavilion is over, the members of the two Elevens descend to earth in their dark and light blue blazers, and, the cynosure of all eyes, stroll about arm in arm with the swagger of bloated modesty—to the immense joy of the schoolboys and the non-Varsity spectators, but the bitter jealousy of various young lady cousins, who would fain accompany their post-prandial exercise. The conversation during this crowded hour of glorious ease is naturally somewhat fragmentary and varied.

FIRST YOUNG GENTLEMAN [bitterly] No; Maud couldn't come. She fell off her bike yesterday, and so didn't dare to show her face here. But she made me promise to note the dresses. You might give me a tip, Nelly. What stuff is that? It looks like what the Army and Navy Stores wrap their bottles in—all crinkly, you know.

NELLY [laughing] Do you mean *crépon*?

Y. G. [dubiously] *Crépon*! How do you spell it? [Scrawls it at her dictation on his shirt-cuff] Scotty! there are some rum sleeves! all hoops—that girl's arms look like a serpent in pain, or a salad dressing bottle. I

must remember that for Maud. Do you call that a blouse?—[*bewildered*]*—*and the hats! How the deuce can I describe the hats? They look like a sunset painted by Turner, in Bedlam, with his eyes shut.

FIRST UNDERGRAD [*meeting brother ditto*] What! Not heard of poor old Vanity! Well, he's been nabbed at last, after a very hot run. His governor has rent his frock-coat, and his mater wore sackcloth in Ascot week.

SECOND U. [*much interested*] But who is she?

FIRST U. [*solemnly*] Jessie Can-Can, of the Tiv. She's an engaging little bounder—you must know her—with the regulation figure of a second-row coryphée, the graces of a barmaid, an ankle worthy of an open-work stocking, and not an aspirate in her peculiar and extensive vocabulary. Lord! how she does mop up poor old Vanity's borrowed shekels! They say she is here to-day. Let us go and find her—shall we?

FIERY M.P. [*emphatically*] I tell you the fellow was not out.

EQUALLY FIERY Q.C. [*still more emphatically*] And I say he was!

F. M.P. [*persuasively*] You are getting blind, Algy! I was by the ropes, and the ball touched the ground as he picked it up.

F. Q.C. [*angrily*] I don't care where the ball was, and I'm not blind. The same thing



## THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

happened twenty years ago when I was in the team, and I ought to know. It was as clean a catch as my own in '73—the umpires always favour the Dark Blue.

F. M. P. [*cuttingly*] It is remarkable how all Cambridge men in the long-field can catch bumballs.

[*They are lost in the crowd, still discussing with the heat of a long-lost youth.*]

UNDERGRAD COUSIN [*innocently*] Oh! he's an awful good sort—stood by me like a brick when the Proggins—

HIS COUSIN [*very much bored*] Really? [*She spies the girl of her bosom in the crowd*]

Excuse me— [*With inexpressible relief*]

My dearest child! for goodness sake take me right away—those two boys have rubbed all the crumple out of me.

HER FRIEND [*surprised*] But they are very nice boys—

H. C. [*emphatically*] My torture! Yes—dear boys! But they have got distemper badly—they are so *very* much up at Oxford. Undergrad cousins are only useful to sit out with, and escape the ubiquitous “sub,” to pay for hansoms, and to teach one polite swear-words. I am pining to talk frocks—I’ve settled my Henley hats, and I want your advice on the dresses. [*With vigour*] No, I will not have any, *not any* grass lawn. I don’t want to look like a dowdy duchess or a shop girl.



[*They steal away, leaving the two nice boys to quarrel.*]

LOVE-LORN YOUTH [*impressively*] Then you'll be by the band-stand at 9.15. I can't get there a minute earlier. You must trot your mater about lots before, so that by nine she will be ready to drop, and then——

HIS FAIR ESCORT [*pouting*] But what about me? You don't seem to think I shall be tired. Besides, I should prefer the Imperial Institute. One can wear a nicer gown there than at that *bourgeois* exhibition.

L.-L. Y. [*with firm "douceur"*] But there aren't any good hiding-places at the Institute, and you can't get lost in that tiny garden. [*With sudden joy*] Look here, couldn't you get your mater on to a camel—it makes one awfully sick, I am told?

H. F. E. [*with the wisdom of woman*] But then we should have to give her brandy, and look after her. Couldn't we go up in the balloon? Mother would never get into the balloon, I'm sure.

L. L. Y. [*ecstatically*] By Jove! the balloon! That's a thumping good idea. We should be so near heaven then—or the Wheel, eh? [*Thoughtfully*] I wonder what it costs to make them stop it for the whole evening?

[*After infinite pains, the crowd is presently persuaded to leave the pitch to the cricketers, and the match begins again.*]

## THE GREATER UNIVERSITIES

*The majority of the spectators condescend to watch, counting the minutes wearily until there is a reasonable excuse for another square meal, euphoniously termed "Afternoon Tea."*

GILDED EXQUISITE [*who is much bothered by the possession of an income which brings him in a pound a minute*] Shall I have another whisky and soda, or shall I find someone to talk to? [*Decides reluctantly on the latter, and proceeds to crawl along the carriages to select whom he shall patronise. Finally stops at a very chic four-in-hand, daintily adorned with picnickers as exquisite as himself.*] Ah, aunt! How d'ye do? This is—er—a—er—surprise. [*Inspecting her party through an insipid eye-glass.*] Ah, Gerty! How d'ye do?

GERTY [*smiling down from the box-seat*] Have you strength to climb up, or would it crumple your frock-coat too much? [*She puts down her parasol, and offers him the end*] Catch hold, and I'll give you a lift. [*G. E. is at length hauled up.*] Going strong, Bertie?

G. E. [*smiling, and trying not to let his eye-glass drop*] Now I am. Er—haven't seen you for ages—er——

G. [*briskly*] Not since Commem, to be sure! But Lord's is a wonderful place on Varsity days. It is like Spurgeon's Paradise—you are surprised to see that so many of your relations have been allowed to get in.

G. E. Er—[*with a titter*—er—I thought—it was the other—er—place that was hot—not—er—Paradise. [*Gazing with pity at the sweltering crowd below*] Er—man; after all—er—ordinary man—is considerably lower—er—than the angels. See! [*Is prevented by his tight coat from italicising this with the requisite stare.*]

G. Thanks. But if you don't sit tighter you will be a fallen—er—angel yourself soon. [*Consolingly*] There is plenty of room. You needn't be afraid of crushing my skirt. [*The skirt is accordingly crushed.*] You don't object to my parasol, Bertie?

G. E. Er—no—I—er—like it. It saves one the trouble of looking at the match. [*Presently, when fortified by a long draught of the nob on his cane*] I—er—say—I have thought of a riddle [—er—awfully good. [*Giggling*] Why are you—er—like Pougher? Er—give it up? Why [*bubbling over*] because you are so good at the hat trick—ha! ha!

[*He waves his stick feebly at the offending confection of birds, fruits, and flowers adorning an otherwise shapely head.*]

[*The G. E. is so much exhausted by giving birth to this idea that he relapses into a chuckling silence. And in this way the afternoon wears away till stumps are drawn, when the fatigued audience cheerfully prepares to endure two more days of self-imposed ennui.*]

ELLE ET LUI

END OF THE CENTURY STYLE

THE NEW IMPRESSIONISM

SCENE - *The New Art Gallery. In the foreground, Miss Cicely, a finished study, in the most piquant of fashions. She is surveying the pictures with disdain, the people with interest. To her enters leisurely a young man, ruddy of countenance, of an athletic figure, in the orthodox frock-coat and top-hat.*

TIME - 3.30 p.m.

CICELY [*striving in vain to look at the diminutive watch on her breast*] Ah! Ned! [*holds out two gloved hands with affected petulance*] Only half an hour late! You are improving. [*Surveys him complacently*] You look most indecently healthy. How did you enjoy your reading party?

NED [*returning the inspection with disguised approval*] Hugely. [*Surprised*] But how did you know where I had been?

C. [*a trifle confused*] Oh! you look as if you had been on a reading party. . . and

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

[*reproachfully*] you told me—don't you remember? [*Aside*] A real thumper! But I had to. I had given myself away so badly.

N. [*vaguely*] To be sure. [*Glancing around anxiously*] Where is the aunt?

C. [*airily*] The mater is doing the "Posters" in the other room. Don't be alarmed, they're quite *comme il faut*—I made sure of that before I let her see them. Rather wriggly, that's all. By the way, she's marking the catalogue for you in blue pencil.

N. Your idea too, I suppose. Well, what are we going to do? The pictures?

[*His eye falls on a landscape with purple cows and a green-brown sunset, and he wishes he had suggested something less exhausting.*]

C. [*decisively*] One doesn't come here to see pictures. Surely——

N. [*seeing his chance*] But to be one, I suppose. I, too, prefer the living model, shocking bad taste as it is.

[*Their eyes meet, and hers drop.*]

C. [*coolly*] Just a little bucolic. Try again. What do you think of my new hat?

N. [*critically*] Turn round quite slowly. [*C. does so, with a most effective look through her veil over her shoulder as she wheels.*] It reminds me of the prize exhibit in Cottage Gardens at a very rural flower show. It is rather jammy.



## THE NEW IMPRESSIONISM

C. [*brightly*] You couldn't give me higher praise. *Épatant, n'est-ce pas?* [*Defiantly*] I like them jammy.

N. [*still surveying*] H'm! Then you should provide smoked glass. But sweets to the——

C. [*shrugging her shoulders*] Oh, you're dreadfully bucolic. You can't make even personal remarks with exhilarating rudeness.

[*Pause. They retire to the ante-hall and a secluded seat behind the armour, C. carefully on the outside, so that everyone entering is rewarded by a tantalising glimpse of a gorgeous hat, a pink neck, the promise of a ravishing figure, a very chic skirt, and a white shoe, size No. 2.*]

N. [*after crossing and re-crossing his legs, and twisting his cane for some embarrassed minutes*] I say, Ciss, I am in the deuce of a mess.

C. [*cheerfully*] What is her name and prospects? Is her face her fortune? or is she going to buy up the mortgages on The Grange?

N. [*disconsolately*] Oh, hang it! you needn't chaff a fellow. It's jolly serious.

C. [*putting out her left foot to compare with the right*] Of course it is! You look as if you were wasting in despair. On your reading party? A blushing, adorably rural *ingénue*. Where did you meet her?

N. [*reprovingly*] My dear Ciss, I didn't say I met her. On the contrary, she most distinctly met me.



C. [*shaking a white-gloved finger*] Worse and worse! You cruel boy! You encouraged her?

N. [*gloomily*] What else could I do? Picture my position—set down with three dull crocks and a tutor in a God-forsaken Dorsetshire village. No wonder I—— [*Brightly*] But I did select the best-looking, hang it!

C. [*aside*] I must remember that for Kitty. [*Smiling*] I sincerely hope you did. But explain, you poor deceived descendant of Adam!

N. [*somewhat shamefacedly*] Well, it was like this. They—oh, they were Girton girls, and they were on a reading party too—and it all began with that confounded “Liddell and Scott.” She had forgotten hers, and so, of course, I lent her mine, or rather old Text-book’s——

C. [*nodding*] I see—a dictionary of that size, like a quarrel, requires two to carry it on. Go on, poor scholar.

N. [*abruptly*] And after [that we got rather thick, and——

C. [*affecting to be puzzled*] Thick? Do you mean fat, or do you refer to the “Liddell and Scott”?

N. No, chummy—you know well enough. I am not a bad scholar—I did get the Newcastle once at Eton—and so we used to do Theocritus together, and you *have* to comment on the passages——

## THE NEW IMPRESSIONISM

C. [*almost laughing*] [That is to say, emend and interpret, isn't it?]

N. [*nodding*] Just so. [*Reflectively*] It's wonderful what a good commentator can get out of a few words. Then it was so jolly dull that when April 1 came round I—

C. [*insinuatingly*] We—I think you mean—we—

N. [*smiling*] Yes, we—oh, we got up the hugest jest. [*Apologetically*] Of course I had to take her into the plan. [*With enthusiasm*] We did it beautifully. We squared the local printer, and got out bills announcing an eclipse of the sun at dawn with Röntgen ray effects, and everyone was bamboozled. It was ripping. My hat! we had games! [*Laughing uproariously*] Scotty! You would have cried with laughter, Cissy. We got them on to the cliff—those corks, and the other girls, and old Textbook, with a notebook and a telescope, and the whole population—and it drizzled, and they waited four hours, from dawn to dewy breakfast, while we, she and I, slept peacefully. And then they came back to find on their dressing-tables, and posted up through the town, “N.B.—This is April 1!” It was screaming! [*Trumpets with laughter.*] But they were sick.

C. [*laughing discreetly*] Excellent, Ned; but I don't see where the complications come in—

N. [*still laughing*] The other girls were savage, and their tutor—you know the sort: short skirt, ankles of an Amazon, ploughboy's boots, and a hat out of the ark—simply tore her hair in handfuls, and——

C. [*slowly*] I see now. Out of self-defence you had to join forces.

N. Yes, quite so. We became quite chums, and then they went away, and I—I wrote her rather a foolish letter, and then—you see—[when she saw . . .] when I had to explain that I didn't quite mean it—that is——[*C. maliciously refuses to help him out.*] Oh, dash it all, Cissy, you know quite well. You did the same when you were at that boarding-school——

C. [*coldly*] I did nothing of the sort, and it is quite irrelevant. Besides, I was a mere child; whereas you are a grown man——

N. [*quietly*] So was he, if I remember. Wasn't aunt in a rage? [*Laughing*] Moreover, I was reading for the schools.

C. [*shortly*] Don't be fatuous, Ned.

N. [*triumphantly*] And I was being boarded too. It's the boarding that does it. Food, you know, is awfully important in its influence on the organism. That Johnny—what's his name?—Malthus——[*Hurriedly*] Oh, no! not Malthus—Buckle, I mean, the fellow who——

C. [*smiling at her memories*] What Buckle said is not evidence, Ned. I want to hear what you said.

## THE NEW IMPRESSIONISM

N. [*maliciously*] Our cases are identical, save that I had more excuse. [*C. rises.*] I say, though, you're not off? All serene, Ciss, I won't chaff. [*C. reseats herself in a more effective attitude, for which she had really risen.*] Well, she got very angry, and said nasty things about my honour and proper respect for women, etc., etc. I've a tender conscience, Cissy, and the result is—I'm in the deuce of a mess.

C. [*coolly*] So you said before. Is that all?

N. [*recollecting*] No; she cried a bit—and, you know, a chap can't stand that.

C. [*aside*] Cried, did she? How did she manage that? [*Smiling*] I am sorry for you. Crying is like crossing the Channel—it takes the curl out.

N. [*gloomily*] It's awfully hard on a chap who must marry money. She hasn't a brass farthing—nor have I, that's my own—and I can't marry her.

C. [*aside*] Can't! Mustn't, he surely means.

N. [*looking at her helplessly*] What am I to do? Can't you suggest something, Ciss?

C. [*calmly*] Why not tell her so?

N. [*hastily*] Oh, I can't do that. [*He taps his boots.*] Quite impossible. She might cry again.

C. And she won't listen to unreason?

N. [*painfully*] I have done my best, but you can't say everything to a girl when you

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have just said the opposite, you know, a week before—it makes one look such a fool, and it's rough on her.

C. [*suddenly*] Is she very pretty?

N. [*unguardedly*] Rather. She's a nailer.

C. [*with a toss of her head*] Oh! [*Sarcastically*] Then there's nothing for it but marriage. I have nothing to suggest [*gathers her skirt for rising*] It's a charming story, Ned—quite idyllic; and you will ask me to—

N. [*hopelessly*] Now, do be serious, Ciss. I am in a horrible position. 'Pon my word, you might sympathise.

C. So I do—[*smiling*] with her. You have treated her disgracefully.

[*Thoughtfully and emphatically smooths out a crease in her skirt.*]

N. [*humbly*] I have.

C. [*divining somewhat*] Well?

N. [*after looking round the room to see that no one can hear*] Fact is, you might have guessed, I don't really care about her, and—and I can't bring myself—

C. [*mockingly*] Somebody else you like better—another nailer? Oh, Ned! what a gay humbug you are! [*Aside*] That ought to draw blood.

N. Yes—[*with mysterious conviction*] a real nailer this time. [*His glance has all the possibilities of the Infinite.*]

C. [*aside*] I wonder, I wonder? [*Reflectively*] That alters the case. [*She looks up*] Oh!



## THE NEW IMPRESSIONISM

bother! Just as I was getting interested mamma appears! The blue pencils have run out, I suppose! [*Hurriedly*] Come and see me to-night, Ned, and come early. I shall be alone: mamma is going to exhibit the—ahem!—family diamonds in the West End. Mind, I don't promise—anything. [*Coaxingly*] Now, as a penance, do the Posters with mamma—I want to get rid of her for another hour.

N. [*over his shoulder as mamma's streaked catalogue absorbs him*] I'm in for the blues, anyway.

C. [*waving her hand*] Bye-bye, Ned. I will send the carriage back for you, mater; and don't be too hard on him—[*with a Parthian glance*] he is still only convalescent from an enlarged heart. [*She rustles off.*]

[*Interval for a Drawing-room Extension  
Lecture on Posters.*]

N. [*an hour and a half later, rather limp*] It's an infernal pity I am so deuced poor—and in a mess besides. The aunt destines her for a peer, I take it, and all those shekels of hers will keep the Jews out of one of our historic country seats. If only I had played my cards better I might—but no; aunt detests me for my poverty, and Cissy is confoundedly dutiful at bottom. Besides, I don't believe she ever did care—that's the worst of being brought up brother and sister.

[*He enters his club to find temporary consolation.*]



ELLE ET LUI—NEW STYLE

II

COFFEE FOR TWO

SCENE - *A dainty boudoir in Mayfair, with clear signs of very feminine occupation.*

TIME - 9.30 p.m.

MISS C. [*costumed in a bewitching evening dress of pale blue silk, with appointments to match*] Ned will be here directly. He doesn't suspect one bit. But I hope it hasn't gone too far; for you can't trust Ned in these matters. [*She proceeds to inspect herself in the mirror.*] Yes, I'll do, I think [*she makes various trifling alterations in her hair, etc. With conviction*] I am better looking than Kitty, and I've got better arms and shoulders [*she fluffs out the gauzy trimming on her corsage with a complacent smile.*] But I was forgetting [*ringing the bell*] Oh, Fisher, I want coffee for two [*Fisher's mouth twitches, but no more*] and I am not at home to anyone save Mr. Ned—[*pause*—and, Fisher [*slowly, and a little shamefacedly*] if my lady asks if anyone called, you need not say Mr. Ned was here. [*Fisher retires discreetly.*] Why doesn't he come? [*Hearing the bell sound, she seizes a novel, and assumes a*

## COFFEE FOR TWO

*negligent attitude, so that a tempestuous foam of white frills is delicately suggested. As Ned enters, with a disappointed yawn*] Oh, it's only you! How early you are! You must have scorched over your dinner.

N. [*pensively*] So I did. The cook at the club is past salvation. [*Impressed by the view*] But I say, you look ripping. That frock is just A1.

C. [*carelessly, and without moving*] I am glad you have some taste left. [*Yawns again.*] Now you must be very agreeable. I have given up a dance for you, and I had promised Lord Foolscap to give him four——

N. [*aside*] Foolscap be——

C. [*rising, and going to table*] Coffee? Black? — [*Their fingers meet on the cup, and they smile.*] To suit what character you have left—eh, Ned?

N. [*as he roams round the room*] You've got a very nice kennel here.

C. [*returning to the sofa*] Yes, not so bad. I coaxed the mater to keep Morris at bay. I prefer Liberty—Liberty Kennel I call it. [*Watching him*] Oh, yes, that is you! I don't know how it got stuck up there, except that you are very stuck up. It is horribly flattering. You must admit you are not so good-looking as all that. Yes, of course you may smoke. [*She strikes a match, and offers it to his moustache.*] I'm sorry; I didn't mean to singe it—I really didn't. [*Declining his*

# VOCES ACADEMICÆ

*cigarette-case*] No, thanks! I'm not up to that yet, though I am getting on. I reserve smoking as a consolation for matrimony. [*Slyly*] I suppose *she* did though?

N. [*indignantly*] You know I don't like women who smoke.

C. [*curtseying*] Thank you by implication. But I thought all that sort of sexless young women smoked to make them think they had nerves.

N. [*fuming*] That sort! She wasn't sexless.

C. [*coolly*] All right; we won't discuss it. She is not worth an argument.

N. [*after a pause*] Now, Cissy, do be serious. You seem to forget——

C. [*smiling*] That you are in a deuce of a mess. Come and sit down here, and we'll have a chat.

*[They sit down on a sofa made, like the famous bicycle, for two. C. has taken her fan as a safeguard.]*

N. [*foolishly impelled by the situation*] I say, what jolly scent you use!

C. Yes, isn't it? Truefitt's latest. I can recommend it [*holding out a square inch of fragrant lace.*]

N. [*abruptly*] It reminds me of what she——

C. [*with a stamp of a blue satin slipper*] Well, you are horrid! Oh! you deserve to be in the deuce of a mess. I wash my hands of you and your affairs.

## COFFEE FOR TWO

N. [*humbly*] I'm awfully sorry, Ciss; I forgot.  
[*Persuasively*] But it is much nicer on you.

C. [*angrily*] That is worse. You oughtn't to know anything about such things. She must have been a dreadful girl. [*She rises with an effective sweep of her skirt.*] I wish I had gone to the dance. Foolscap may be a brainless idiot, but he doesn't insult me.

[*She finds a seat three yards off.*]

N. [*very contritely*] I am sorry, very sorry, Ciss. [*Persuasively*] Now do be reasonable.

[*After some pretty skirmishing she returns to the sofa.*]

C. [*still hurt*] I don't care about reminding people of other people—I don't. Hadn't you better say my face reminds you of her?

N. [*cheerfully, after a close inspection*] Not one bit; for you can forgive, and she can't. [*C. is considerably mollified; but, to punish him, puts up her fan.*] I think you might let me see something more than your eyebrows; they're awfully nice, but I prefer——

[*He succeeds in taking away the fan, after a half-hearted resistance.*]

C. [*sniffing at her square inch of lace*] That will do, Ned. No more nonsense. We must get to business—the mater may come in at any moment.

N. [*with a smoky groan*] I suppose so; but I was just beginning to be comfortable.

C. [*a trifle anxiously*] Just as you please.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

Perhaps you have changed your mind since I last saw you. I thought you didn't care——

N. [*with emphasis*] I don't. But, Cissy——

[*Turns to her.*]

C. [*dropping her eyes to inspect her pink nails*] I only see that you are as changeable as any girl, and without a girl's reasons. [*Pause.*]

C. *admires her feet, N. tugs his moustache.* Have you thought of anything?

N. [*surprised*] Lord! no! I thought you were going to do that.

C. Well, I have thought of something.

N. [*joyfully*] You have? Cis, you're a——

C. [*tentatively*] She ought to be told how the land lies, oughtn't she? [*Watching the effect.*]

N. Exactly—how the land lies.

[*They both smile vaguely.*]

C. [*carelessly*] You won't go?

N. [*decisively*] I can't, Ciss, I really can't; besides, it would come—er—more delicately from a third person—a woman for choice.

C. [*aside*] He can't be trusted. [*Impressively*] And so I thought——

N. [*hopefully*] Yes?

C. [*demurely*] That the only person who can properly represent the family—and it is a family matter—is the mater.

N. [*aghast*] What! Aunt! [*He lets the cigar ash fall in a heap on his white waistcoat.*] Oh! don't joke, Cissy. Ha! ha! Oh, lord, Cissy, you can be deuced funny! Aunt! [*Chuckles hugely.*]



## COFFEE FOR TWO

C. [*gravely*] Well, why not? I am sure she would do it wonderfully——

N. [*rising to pace up and down*] Are you mad, Ciss? It is *quite* impossible.

C. Mad? Oh, dear no! It is you who *were* mad. [*She lets her hands fall into her lap.*] I have nothing more to suggest.

N. [*drawing close to her*] Now look here, Ciss. I have an idea. [*Coaxingly*] Supposing you were to go?

C. [*withdrawing her hand*] I? Really, Ned, you are too absurd. [*With pouting hauteur*] To make me the go-between of a silly boy and a designing girl—really!

N. [*warmly*] Designing! She is not that, Ciss.

C. [*aside*] He is quite right. *She* is not the designing girl. [*Relenting*] But I don't know her.

N. No; but I can give you her address, and you might try to smooth her down. You can be so awfully charming when you like.

C. [*aside*] Well, men are idiots! Fancy, sending one girl to another on an errand like that! [*Thoughtfully*] Where does this Circe live?

N. [*fumbling for his pocket-book*] There is her address.

C. [*coolly*] I'll have that flower too, please, Ned. It's no use doing things by halves.

N. [*reluctantly*] Oh, I suppose you must.

[*He gives it to her with the air of a suffering saint.*]

C. [*smiling*] Now the hair, please.

N. [*abruptly*] I haven't got any.



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

C. [*calmly*] Don't tell stories, Ned. I saw it. I won't go unless you give me that.

[*She holds out her hand inexorably.*

N. [*after an internal struggle*] There it is then! What a tyrant you are!

C. [*examining it*] It's hideous. Really, you might have better taste. Not even a two-guinea sample.

N. [*triumphantly*] You are quite wrong. It's her very own, for I——

C. [*coldly*] Thank you; you can spare me the details. [*Pause. N. has sunk into a delicious reverie.*] You give me *carte blanche*, Ned?

N. [*dubiously*] Yes; but let her down easy, Ciss, for my sake!

C. [*scornfully*] For *your* sake? For hers, you mean. [*Sympathetically*] Poor girl! to have hair of that colour!

N. [*anxiously*] And don't blacken me too much, Ciss. Remember that I am a mere man, if an erring one.

C. [*scornfully*] Oh, you're all right. The man always has the best of these explanations. [*The clock strikes 11.30 p.m. C. rises hastily.*] Now you must go, Ned; the mater will be coming in.

N. [*with grateful reluctance*] You are a brick, Ciss. I am eternally——

C. [*calmly*] I may be a brick, but that is no reason why you should make my hand a fiery red.

N. [*with emotion*] Good-night, Ciss. You will write and tell me all about her—it, I mean?

C. [*with emphasis*] Oh, you shall hear. [*As*

## COFFEE FOR TWO

*Ned turns to go*] Oh, Ned, [*mysteriously*] you might give Fisher something. . He has been very forbearing, and it would come better from you, I think.

N. [*nodding*] Rather! [*He retires with a lingering look at the blue silk dress and shoes.*]

C. [*laughing, as she puts up her feet, and shakes out her flounces*] What a dear old simpleton it is! He didn't suspect one bit. [*Looking at the hair and flowers*] I wonder how many more of these precious relics he has. Drawerfuls, I suppose. What fools girls are—particularly some girls! [*She smiles sleepily at her reflection in the mirror.*] I should very much like to know if there *was* anybody else. [*Holding up the lock of hair*] Kitty must have had some pleasant quarters of an hour. [*Throwing the flowers and hair into the dying fire*] They singe now as they singed when he got them. [*Decisively*] I'll make her give up his hair and flowers; I will. [*Draws the curtain back, and opens the windows*] What an odour a cigar leaves, and Ned smokes very fragrant ones; the mater is sure to spot it. She has a terrible nostril for tobacco. I had better go to bed. The blue frock has done all it can do to-night. Mothers unfortunately are proof against this sort of thing. [*Shaking the tempestuous foam of her petticoat; then with a vivacious wave of her fan at the photograph on the mantel-piece*] You are stuck up, and it suits you, more's the pity. [*She whisks off the electric light, and departs.*]

### III

## THE ETERNAL UNDERGRAD

SCENE - *An undergraduate's rooms in King Edward Street, Oxford, furnished in the best undergraduate taste—sporting prints, rows of stage beauties, a pile of yellow-backs, a rackful of sticks and pipes, with gun case and polo clubs above it.*

TIME - 10.45 a.m. *Breakfast set for two, with breakfast cooling in the fire-place. On the table a heap of letters, the Sportsman and the Sporting Times; a fox terrier asleep on the window-seat.*

NED [*enters in correct costume—a pale green coat, a collar that turns up and down, a very scarlet tie, brown holland waistcoat, flannel trousers turned up high, very pink socks, and pumps*] Foolsap not down yet, lazy beggar! [*Opens newspaper*] Ah! the usual—seven centuries—W. G., Abel, Ranjy, etc.—the world seven centuries further on this morning, it would seem. [*Turns over letters*] Bills, duns as before. “The Dean presents his compliments”—oh, Sunday chapels! “Mr. Textbook

## THE ETERNAL UNDERGRAD

presents his——"—cutting lectures! Hullo! a wire! Stuck at the bottom, of course—the female mind has no sense of logic or humour—one of those racing touts, I suppose—not this time, my boy! No more dead snips for me; I'm not yet over the Chester Cup! [*Munching toast*] But I may as well see what the liar says. [*Reads*] Hallo! "Coming up for the day—be sure and keep Foolscap to lunch—am bringing the mater and Totty—Cissy." Well, I'm jiggered! Who the deuce is Totty? [*Reflectively*] I'm glad it isn't to-morrow. The aunt would hardly have cared to have met the "Storm in a Teacup" chorus at my hospitable board, and even Cissy draws the line at the young ladies of a provincial company. Now to get my room straight. [*He gathers an armful of actresses' photos and throws them under the sofa*] And the Dalilahs. [*He stuffs away an armful of translated novels.*] Aunt is so touchy; she has no conception of the "im ganzen guten resolut zu leben." Ah! an idea. [*Putting Liddell and Scott conspicuously out*] That reminds me—Gad! what fun I had!

[*Enter his Aunt, Cissy, and a young lady of impeccable appearance and costume.*]

N. Ah! Aunt, charmed! [*Giving C. a little finger*] How d'ye do, Ciss? [*Bows to young lady*] [*To Aunt, who is glaring at the breakfast*] Shocking, isn't it? My chum, Foolscap, will breakfast late and interrupt my read-

ing ; like to see what a healthy peer affects  
*[Lifting the covers of the dishes] [Aside]*—  
 N.B.—No crime to breakfast late if you are a  
 peer. *[General conversation follows, in the  
 midst of which Foolschap appears, slightly be-  
 wildered and still rather sleepy.]*

C. *[servently, and with her most fascinating  
 smile]* Oh, Lord Foolschap, do you think you  
 could take my mother and Miss Fashionplate to  
 see some of the colleges? You know so much  
 about their history. I think, mother, I'll stay  
 here ; I don't feel up to sight-seeing. I shan't  
 interrupt your reading, shall I, Ned? I will be  
 quite quiet. *[She sits down pensively.]*

N. *[as Foolschap, torn between hunger and  
 admiration for Miss Fashionplate, lingers]*  
 Awfully good of you, Scappy ; take a guide-  
 book, won't you? What? Not the "blue  
 liar"? Try the brown one this time. *[He stuffs  
 the publication into his pocket]* Don't let it  
 spoil the sit of your coat, old chap.

*[Foolschap departs with the aunt and her  
 protégée.]*

N. *[anxiously]* I say, Ciss, you're not really  
 bad, are you?

C. *[laughing]* Of course not—not now. How  
 could I be? Only the mater does get on the  
 nerves sometimes. *[Taking the pins out of  
 her hat]* What are you laughing at?

N. *[in convulsions on the sofa]* Oh ! not at  
 you, Ciss. You look as fresh as a daisy, and a



## THE ETERNAL UNDERGRAD

jolly sight smarter. I'm thinking of poor old Foolscap, trotting the aunt round the Shelley excrescence without his "brekker." Lord! it is funny. An exquisite lesson in the duty of early rising.

C. [*pitching her hat, parasol, and gloves on to the sofa*] Poor old thing! and he wanted to stay so much. I thought it was for me. Women, after all, only come second in a man's, as in a dog's, affections. [*She proceeds to survey the room*] Plain living and high thinking the order here, eh, Ned? Photos?—h'm, May Yohé, Letty Lind, Trilby—the usual selection. Why don't you discover a new beauty, Ned?

N. [*gloomily*] I wish I could.

C. [*to herself*] He hasn't one of me, I observe; but he has one of Kitty, horribly flattering.

N. [*anxiously*] But I say, Ciss, have you nothing to tell me?

C. [*pretending not to hear*] Is this your bike? Beeston Humber, too—

N. [*shortly*] Confound my bike!

C. [*twirling the wheels and pinching the tyres in a knowing way*] Ah! I don't believe in these Clincher tyres, you should stick to Dun—

N. [*explosively*] Oh! d— the Clincher tyres. [*Then, seeing her pick up her hat and proceed to put it on*] What are you looking for?

C. [*stolidly*] My hat pins. [*Stabbing them*



*into her hair, viciously*] Not a mirror anywhere! Is it on straight, Ned?

N. [*astonished*] Why, where are you off to, Ciss?

C. [*coldly*] To look at the Burne-Jones' tapestry, until you have remembered that you are not talking to undergraduates.

N. [*contritely*] I am deuced sorry, Ciss; I didn't really mean it. I'll promise not to offend again. But surely you know I am dying to hear if you——

C. [*smiling*] Why can't you have patience, then? You don't suppose I came down here merely to see you. [*Her eyes, however, seem to tell a different story.*]

N. [*with relief, and lighting a cigarette*] Then you have seen her?

C. [*sitting down dejectedly*] Yes. [*To the fox terrier*] No, dear, I really can't have you in my best lap.

N. [*eagerly*] And what did you think of her?

C. [*carelessly*]—Not much!

N. [*astonished*] You don't think she is pretty?

C. No, not exactly. So-so. Pretty enough to take the average man's fancy.

N. Thanks! and did she——

C. [*slowly, and watching the effect*] I'm sorry to say she didn't. It's no go, Ned; you'll have to marry her, or break her heart.

N. Oh, fiddles! That's what they all say.

## THE ETERNAL UNDERGRAD

C. [*with relief*] [But girls have hearts, Ned, if men haven't.] [*Aside*] All say? I wonder how many have said it to him.

N. Oh, I suppose so. I wish they weren't so sensitive, though.

C. That's your fault, not theirs. [*Conclusively*] So you'll have to marry her, I'm afraid.

N. [*equally so*] Well, I won't—that's flat.

C. Then you will be disgraced. [*Whispering*]

N. [*calmly*] I am that already.

C. And the mater will cut you.

N. [*lighting another cigarette*] Well, I can stand that, saving your presence, for I am used to it.

C. [*delicately*] But I thought you rather liked her—

N. [*he puffs smoke deliberately while C. waits anxiously*] So I do. She's a very nice girl. I may even say an uncommonly nice girl, with almost as good a figure as yours, Ciss.

C. Thank you, Ned.

N. [*calmly*] And a very pretty mouth and eyes—[*his look wanders off to the mantelpiece*]—but I'm not going to marry her. [*His look rests on C.'s face.*]

C. [*aside*] Now I know it's all right. [*Laughing maliciously*] That's just what she said, Ned—not at any price, or fifty Granges.

N. [*bounding up*] What! You've squared her! You're a ripper, Ciss!

C. [*keeping him at bay*] [She said she wouldn't marry you at any price—*slowly*—a broken-down undergrad, encumbered with debt, of doubtful character, and no reputation—

N. [*very much hurt*] I say, draw it mild.

C. [*in triumph*] Am I to tell you, or not? Where had I got to? Oh, yes—with no reputation and conceited—detestably conceited, Ned—into the bargain I told you—

N. [*sulkily*] I don't believe it.

C. My dear Ned, she was only fooling you, poor dear. Of course, in self-defence I had to tell her that—

N. [*eagerly*] Yes, what?

C. [*sweetly*] That I cordially agreed—a broken-down undergrad, encumbered with—

N. [*irritably*] All right, you needn't repeat it. I think, Ciss, you might have stood up for me a wee bit—

C. [*aside*] I rubbed it in with salt. [*Smiling*] But you gave me *carte blanche*. [*Rising and looking out of the window*] Anyway, the joint ownership of the Grange is once more in the matrimonial market.

[*Pause. Miss C. continues to look from the window. N. sits biting his moustache*]

N. [*awkwardly*] I say, Ciss, did she say anything about a lock of hair?

C. [*innocently*] Hair? Whose hair?

N. [*still more awkwardly*] Oh, the lock I was ass enough to give her—

## THE ETERNAL UNDERGRAD

C. [*contemptuously*] Oh, *that*! Yes, she gave me that, and some very silly, badly-written letters——

N. [*sarcastically*] Which, of course, you read.

C. [*reprovingly*] You gave me *carte blanche*, Ned. Besides, she treated me to some choice extracts.

N. The deuce she did!

C. [*waving a warning finger*] Remember, Ned, you promised. I don't want to have to find my hat pins a second time.

N. All serene. [*Carelessly*] But that lock. You might give it me back.

C. [*with a heartless laugh*] In case you should want it again? You thrifty Ned, you plainly don't wish to get bald. Well, I haven't got it here. You really don't suppose I carry it about with me, do you?

N. [*confusedly*] I wasn't thinking—I——

C. [*aside*] He doesn't offer to let me keep it. [*Putting a hand on his shoulder*] Poor old thing! But, as the mater says, it's a lesson.

N. [*testily*] Oh!——

C. Tut, tut. It serves you right, Ned. It will teach you every girl you cast eyes at is not dying to be mistress of the Grange. [*Aside*] Thank goodness!

N. [*gloomily*] Well, Ciss, if you are going to mount the high moral horse, I may as well chuck it. You might give a chap some comfort.

C. [*cheerfully*] What comfort can I give

you? Considering that you are well out of a distasteful bargain on both sides, I don't see why you should be comforted. You don't care for her, and she——

N. [*struck by an idea*] I've a jolly good mind to write and thank her.

C. [*aside*] He mustn't do that. [*Coaxingly*] I wouldn't do that if I were you. [*Takes him to the sofa, and sits down beside him.*] Look here, Ned, if only you—[*hears voices*]*—oh! bother! there they are back. Now we shall have no more peace.*

[*C. jumps up hurriedly and finds a dejected seat on the other side of the room.*]

[*Enter the trio, hot and bored, and Foolscape absolutely ravenous.*]

MAMMA [*complacently*] Such an interesting morning, Cissy. You should have come. Is your head better, dear?

C. [*briskly*] Much better. Ned has been as good as gold, and wonderfully quiet, considering. I couldn't see a bit clearly before, but Ned has given me a lesson in Plato's ethics—[*smiling at Foolscape*]*—the Platonic affections, you know. It has done my head a lot of good. [Radiantly] I can see much more clearly now—a great many things.*



## IV UNE PASSIONNETTE

SCENE - *The illuminated gardens of the College of St. Theresa during a Commem Ball. Miss C. sitting alone in a secluded garden seat under the lilacs, the hawthorn, and the clematis-covered wall. In front of her numerous infatuated pairs strolling up and down in appropriate costumes and engaged in appropriately silly conversation. In the distance can be heard the measured throb of a waltz.*

TIME - 1.30 a.m.; the stars just beginning to fade.

C. [*surveying the promenaders with melancholy resignation, not entirely caused by the fact that they can't see her*] Well, I never dreamed I should hate a Commem dance so. I really thought Ned cared a little. [*Her cousin strolls leisurely up*] Oh! it's you! I hope you haven't hurried yourself. So you have managed to tear yourself away at last.

N. [*shortly*] What do you mean?

C. [*beginning to fan herself to keep cool*] Don't trouble to make up an excuse, please. But unless my programme lies, this, I believe,



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is my dance with you ; and you come for me half-way through it, without so much as an apology. Do I dance so badly then?

N. [*half angry, half ashamed*] How on earth was I to know where Foolscap would spirit you away to? I went to the aunt—got jumped on as usual—was told that she was not your keeper, or words to that effect ; and finally, after running over half the college——

C. [*still fanning*] With Miss Colza—I beg her pardon and yours—Miss *de* Colza.

N. [*sitting down reproachfully*] Now, don't be spiteful, Ciss. I wasn't with the Colza girl at all.

C. [*more reproachfully*] Nor was I with Foolscap. But I do think that when you particularly asked me up for the Terry Ball, and I gave up the reception at the F.O., you needn't dance the whole evening with that atrocious girl.

N. [*good-humouredly*] Be reasonable, Ciss.

C. [*bitingly*] Reasonable ! it is downright rude.

N. [*slightly moved*] How can you have the face, Ciss, to talk like that?

C. [*with sarcastic demureness*] I can't help my face, I suppose. Anyway, it's a better face than hers.

N. [*approvingly*] Hear, hear !

C. And she *is* atrocious, shockingly bad form, and a regular outsider. You can't deny it?

N. [*laughing*] I shan't try to. She leaps—and leaps high.

C. [*warmly*] And not even good-looking.

## UNE PASSIONNETTE

Greasy hair, ugh! No doubt it's cheaper so, and oiled like that is an excellent trade advertisement.

N. [*placidly*] I admit the oil and the advertisement.

C. [*more warmly*] And she paints, and paints very badly.

N. [*calmly*] Yes, she will have to take lessons in painting, I fear.

C. [*shutting up her fan with a snap*] Well, all I can say is that I am pained and surprised.

N. [*crossing his legs and lighting a cigarette*] It's painful, I'll agree—but not surprising.

C. [*sarcastically*] Of course not—not at all surprising!

N. [*desperately*] What would you have? After all, she has the dollars, and when a chap is over head and ears in debt, the dollars are the first consideration. Beggars can't be choosers. Unless I marry money I am done for. I must either sell The Grange or go where the oof bird oils his nest. I can't and won't sell The Grange, and so—oh, don't let's talk about it. She'll improve with care and education.

C. [*turning away, and pulling a sprig of lilac to pieces*] I see. It's all settled then.

N. [*puffing reflectively at his cigarette*] Not quite. [*The last petals of lilac are miraculously spared*] But it will be, soon. [*The last petals go where autumn's snows went*] You see, they've threatened to foreclose unless I can—

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

those chaps have the merit of speaking plainly — unless I can give them good reasons for not doing so — *i.e.*, by getting engaged to money cash down. Fortunately The Grange, plus the disreputability of an ancient name, has a market value, and so I am going to accept a business-like offer. After all The Grange is more important than my happiness, and to keep it is worth swallowing a good dose of Colza oil.

C. [*slowly*] Aren't you rather hasty?

N. [*looking at her rather curiously*] No ; I don't think so.

C. [*avoiding his eyes, hesitatingly*] But is there no one else than that terrible creature? Just imagine her, Ned, in The Grange dining-room, beside the family portraits!

N. [*wincing*] Don't, please. I've made up my mind to go through with it, and when the time comes for her to join the women of the family on the dining-room walls, no doubt Herkomer or one of those chaps will soften her down a bit. She will be able to pay them to do it. A portrait in oil ought to suit her, too.

C. [*persistently*] But is there no one else? Surely——

N. [*despondingly*] No one ; the time is, happily, short. There might have been someone else, but the fact is——

C. [*eagerly*] Well?

N. [*coldly*] I found out that I was mistaken. Let me explain. A fortnight ago I ran over to

## UNE PASSIONNETTE

Cambridge to see the Mays [*C. starts slightly, at which N. smiles grimly*]; and at the races I met that other girl there, and of course we got talking.

C. [*aside*] If Kitty peached on me I'll never forgive her. [*Puts up her fan*] Yes?

N. [*quietly*] And she told me the truth. It was bound to come out sooner or later. I learned from her that the whole of that reading party—her share of it, at least—was a put-up job between you and her; that you sent her there to make a fool of me, that you got her to write those letters and ask for that lock of hair; and that then, to add insult to injury, you posed as my saviour, when in reality you had faked the whole trick. I may have been an ass, but I was not a hypocrite. And that settled me. [*Silence*] [*Bitterly*] Oh, Cissy, I wouldn't have thought it of you, that you could have been so heartless. [*Imploringly*] Tell me now it isn't true, and I'll believe your word against hers. 'Pon my honour I will. It isn't true, is it?

C. [*carefully guarding her face. Coldly*] Yes, it's quite true.

N. [*desperately*] You did it on purpose?

C. [*calmly from behind her fan*] Yes, on purpose.

[*A pause. N. rises.*]

N. Well, there's nothing more to be said—

C. Where are you going to?

N. [*recklessly*] I may as well go back to the Colza girl. She does play above board. I'm

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

disappointed—but it's only another of my illusions, I fancy. [*Musingly, as he looks at her sadly*] I thought once——

C. [*with a catch in her voice*] What did you think?

N. [*carelessly*] Never mind. It doesn't matter now. It's no use going back on the past. It's only fair, though—I shall tell the Colza girl some day.

C. [*firmly*] You shall tell me. I insist on knowing.

N. [*mockingly*] Really?

C. Yes, really.

N. [*indifferently*] Oh, well—it's nothing much, after all. You remember our first Commem? Well, you gave me to understand——

C. [*frigidly*] Did I? You are singularly easily misled.

N. Perhaps I am, where you are concerned. Only another of your tricks, I suppose? [*Thoughtfully*] It was on this very seat, too, and I thought——

C. [*fanning herself carefully*] [*Aside*] So it was. I had forgotten that. [*To him*] Well?

N. And then that Christmas at The Grange, when you allowed me under the mistletoe——

C. [*emphatically*] I'll swear I never did.

N. Oh, it doesn't matter now, only I shall have to tell the Colza girl some day. I thought then, so did aunt, for she nagged me to death, and everyone else thought—but—— [*Turns away abruptly.*]



## UNE PASSIONNETTE

C. [*abruptly*] Where are you off to in such a hurry?

N. I'm due to the Colza girl, and I can't let her wait. [*Sarcastically*] I'll send you Foolscap, if you like. He is quite ready to pledge his coronet and to take your shekels as a small instalment by way of gratitude for his condescension——

C. [*slowly*] Which is more than some others are.

N. [*half turning back*] What did you say?

C. Oh, nothing. I was admiring Foolscap's wisdom. [*Lightly*] You are right. I wouldn't sell The Grange if I were you. I would marry money and then——

N. Oh! is that all? [*But, seeing something in her eyes, pauses.*]

C. [*rises and puts a hand on his shoulder*] Well, I will tell you—you wouldn't give me a chance before. I arranged that plot——

N. [*his face hardening*] So you've already said.

C. [*letting the words trickle out irritatingly*] I arranged that plot—to see if you were the same as in that first Commem.

N. [*distrustfully*] Oh!

C. Oh! is that all you can say? [*Holding out her hands and shyly glancing up at him*] What a goose you are, Ned! Can't you see? [*with a pathetic stamp*] How blind you are!

N. [*smiling to himself*] I do see. And you find I am different—*voilà tout!* [*He turns away.*]



C. [*stopping him*] But *I* am not different. A girl doesn't change just because—because—oh, Ned, you might help me out!

N. [*unable to dissemble any longer—with a gasp*] Ciss!

C. [*with sudden calmness*] For love of the dear old Grange, Ned, I will lend you a small instalment of my shekels, but on one condition—

N. [*puzzled*] Well?

C. [*looking down*] I love my money so much that I cannot part with it, and [*looking up*] so you must take the owner with it.

N. [*quite overcome*] Ciss!

C. [*slyly*] The English law doesn't permit bigamy, does it, Ned?

N. [*bewildered*] What do you mean?

C. [*raking him fore and aft*] And the Colza girl loves her money, too.

N. Well?

C. [*dropping her fire*] So you'll have to choose between her and me, Ned. I am afraid you can't have both of us.

N. Oh! Ciss, you really mean it? [*He begins to talk unintelligibly.*]

C. I suppose so. [*Trying to recover her independence*] You needn't grasp my hand so tight. The money's not yet there, and I am not going to run away. [*Disengaging his arm*] And we are not going to dance on the grass. Ah! there's the band beginning. They will all be passing—[*with an ineffectual struggle*]—and you are due to Miss de Colza.

## UNE PASSIONNETTE

N. [*shortly*] Miss de Colza be——

C. [*putting up a hand*] Fie! Ned! She has a good figure, I will say that for her, but—  
[*whispering in his ear*—that's no reason for spoiling mine, is it?

[*Interval for incoherent conversation.*

N. [*presently*] My hat! won't the aunt be sick!

C. [*smiling ineffably*] Not half so sick as you would have been had you taken——

N. [*with a pleasurable shudder*] Sh! don't remind me of it. You little witch, Ciss! When did you make up your mind to take me in a second time?

C. [*carelessly*] Oh! I don't know. It's no use trying to get at my watch.

N. [*triumphantly*] And I was right. You did mean it on that first Commem?

C. [*with sweet grudgingness*] Perhaps. I can't remember now.

N. And you will admit about the mistletoe?

C. [*shyly*] I don't know. It was Christmas time, and we were cousins.

N. [*audaciously*] Not as good a reason as you usually give. You must give a better one now, or else——

C. [*protestingly*] No, Ned, I can't, I really can't.

N. [*persuasively*] There's no one looking. They're all at supper. Just one——

C. [*resignedly*] Oh, well, I suppose you must. But be quick. [*Sharp curtain as the band is heard playing Gungl's "Amoretten Tänze."*

## A DIALOGUE OF THE NIGHT

I HAD escaped from my partner, and was viewing the "varied scene" from behind a fuzzy palm tree, when I was suddenly greeted, "Come, Nelly, what a time you have been! This is our dance——." At the same time I was smartly tapped on the shoulder with a programme.

I turned round to face an unknown but rather handsome young man. "My name," I remarked briskly, "is not Nelly, nor is this our——"

"I *beg* your pardon," he replied in deep contrition. It is curious how blushing suits some men, just as it does some women. I believe he was thinking the same.

"Oh! pray don't," I added cheerfully. "In crowded ballrooms such mistakes are very natural, particularly when——"

"Yes," he broke in eagerly, "particularly when——" he looked shyly away.

"Well?" I said encouragingly.

"Particularly when," he ran his eye over me, "they both—wear such pretty frocks."

I felt disappointed. "Now you are stupid," I said.

He sighed. "Nelly says the same. The truth is unfortunately stupid." He continued

## A DIALOGUE OF THE NIGHT

to glance at me with shy penitence. "You are not dancing," he began afresh. "Can I not help you to find your partner?"

I scanned him thoroughly—he had rather nice eyes. Yes, he could be trusted.

"That is just what I don't want," I said calmly.

He smiled. "I see. But you are very conspicuous here," and he looked so simple that I forgave his audacity. "I can show you a beautiful hiding-place." He offered me an arm.

"And what about Nelly?" I asked.

He started ruefully. "I had forgotten all about her," he replied, still looking at me. He wavered, and candidly I did not want him to go. "Nelly," he said, "will understand by-and-bye. I will chance it, if I may?"

What could I do but take his proffered arm?

We strolled out into the illuminated Quad.

"Have you ever seen a Don's rooms?" he asked presently.

"Never."

"Then I can show you mine. They are on view to-night." Accordingly we mounted half a dozen stairs. The room was just like that of an undergrad's, only larger. On the mantelpiece there was the usual long row of photos. I wondered which was Nelly's.

"I am disappointed," I said, after a brief inspection.

"I am sorry," he replied, with the suggestion of a glance, "for I am not."

He fetched me an ice and we ate it—I mean them—in silence. Suddenly in a puff of wind a door slammed.

“Good heavens!” he ejaculated, jumping up; “the oak has got sported.”

“What fun!” I remarked gleefully.

“It only opens from the outside,” he said slowly. “We are shut in.”

“Do you mean to say,” I asked, alarmed, “that we can’t get out?”

“Oh, not quite so bad as that. You see,” he explained soothingly, “people have to be careful with Dons; that is why the door only opens from without. My scout will be here—say 8 a.m. It is now 12 p.m.—only eight hours. How well we shall know each other by then!” he added consolingly.

“This is awful,” I said; “quite awful. Can’t you smash it in?”

He glanced at me roguishly. “It would attract a great deal of attention,” he remarked with delicate emphasis. I thought of mamma and agreed. “Perhaps someone will release us before eight,” he added, and so we fell to hopeful talking. He really was an entertaining talker, and had a delightful way of dotting his i’s by his glances. Only I could have wished he wouldn’t talk so much of Nelly.

“What would Nelly say to this?” I asked to stop him.

“I don’t like to think,” he replied. “She can



## A DIALOGUE OF THE NIGHT

be very cross, and——” he looked at his glossy pumps, “and also very charming.” Why he should then look at me, to confirm this, I can’t think.

“I suppose she is very pretty?” I suggested. He looked at me critically while I fanned myself nonchalantly.

“Oh, very!” was the cruel reply, “prettier than I can say.”

“You seem very fond of her.” I felt quite jealous.

“I have grown to be,” he answered warmly. He dared to tell me that, after all he had been insinuating during the last hour.

“Perhaps I have met her,” I went on coaxingly; “won’t you tell me her name?”

He looked at me curiously, and then said solemnly, “I can’t.”

“That is to say you won’t.”

“No, I can’t.”

“Why not? Is it such a great secret?”

“Oh dear no. I don’t know it.”

“What?” I said, hoping he was joking. “Do you mean to say you don’t *really* know?”

“The intuition of woman is wonderful,” he murmured to himself. “No, I *really* don’t know it.”

“Then she doesn’t exist?” I asked, getting angry.

“That is putting it very crudely. There *was* a Nelly; she has become somebody else.”



"Take me back to mamma at once," I said indignantly.

He glanced at the door. "I wish I could," he replied, "but I can't. Besides" (looking at his watch), "I expect 'mamma' has gone home, and is sleeping the sleep of the chaperone."

My foot beat on the floor with wrath. I felt as if I must cry—or laugh. He got up and looked out of the window.

"I had better risk it," he muttered, and before I could stop him he had swung himself out and disappeared.

Ten minutes passed. Then I heard his voice on the other side of the door. "Do you still wish to be let out?" it asked.

"Of course," I answered. "Let me out at once, *please*."

"On one condition—that you forgive me."

Well, he had done his best, and it was not his fault.

"I will forgive you," I said softly.

"Then push back the snib," he said quickly, "and turn the handle." I did so, and the door opened. I was mad with vexation. The door *did* open on the inside, after all.

"How dare you do such a thing?" I asked majestically.

He actually laughed. "I haven't got a looking-glass, so I can't explain very well," he replied; "besides, you have forgiven me!" Really he was quite incorrigible. "Do you

## A DIALOGUE OF THE NIGHT

know," he added, "what scouts call this sort of door?"

"Oaks, I suppose!" I replied pettishly, for the sting of the jest was still rankling.

"They aspirate the word. 'Hoaks' is what they call them, and they are not far wrong."

We went back in silence to mamma. "Nelly has again changed," he remarked to me later on, after the third extra. "I believe she is going to become a third person."

He was right. Six months later she did, and this time there was no doubt about her name.

## THE FRUITS OF DIPLOMA—CY

BY this time, of course, it is all past history, but as none of my friends can understand why "I made such an ass of myself," I owe them an explanation. *Cherchez la femme* is an excellent maxim, but when there are hundreds of *femmes*—well, they play the deuce with the universe and the university.

All my trouble (like that in the Transvaal) can be traced to a telegram. Celia had wired for me, and, like a dutiful slave, I sped to her side on the wings of the G.W.R.

"I am so glad you came," she whispered as I dropped into the vacant stall, "for I have lots to say to you!"

"I am always happy," I replied, "to spare time from the neglect of *my* duties to devote to the adornment of *your* person."

Celia reproved me with a bewitching frown. "Now you must be serious," she said.

"Is that why you summoned me here?" I asked, with a gentle wave towards the chorus-crowded stage.

"Well, I knew nothing short of a burlesque would bring you up in term time——"

"As if we hadn't enough of them at Oxford!"

## THE FRUITS OF DIPLOMA—CY

I replied, endeavouring to focus the front row of coryphées. Celia is charming, but she has one defect—she takes life too seriously, and as she is in training to be the helpmate of a Don, I very properly encourage all her grave attempts to be giddy.

“Are they going to win?” Celia asked eagerly.

“I don’t know; but I am told they are very rough still. They have no finish——”

To my surprise Celia broke in indignantly. “Please remember,” she said, “that your cynical Common-room gibes are very much out of place.” Considering the song that was then being sung, this was just a little astonishing.

“The papers say so,” I expostulated, much hurt.

“The papers!” Celia repeated, with a contemptuous flirt of her fan. “Who cares about papers written by men?” If only academic pamphleteers would bear this in mind!

“My dear Celia, it was from yourself that I learned to respect public opinion. Look at the betting——”

“Do you mean to say they are betting on the result? It is disgraceful! The Vice-Chancellor should forbid it.”

“What! When owing to agricultural depression it is the only way of turning an honest penny! Now if Cambridge——”

"Pray, what has Cambridge to do with it?" asked Celia with a scornful sniff.

"Why, everything," I replied, in wonder. There are times when I confess that I despair of her sanity. "They are not nearly so rough——"

"That," murmured Celia, "I can quite believe."

"And they have five old blues." Here Celia was rude enough to laugh.

"You great silly!" she said, "I wasn't asking you about the boat race, but about the B.A. for women."

"Oh!" I retorted huffily, "I don't know anything about *that*. No one at Oxford cares a twopenny——"

"Are they going to get it?" Celia again broke in.

"I sincerely hope not," I answered warmly. Celia's fan promptly hung out danger-signals.

"Why, pray?" she enquired, with a touch of asperity.

"My dear Celia, just because a woman's a woman and a man is a man."

My eyes turned to the stage, but of course there are exceptions to every rule.

"That is a man's reason," Celia said loftily, "and a very selfish one."

"It is better," I answered crushingly, "to be selfish of what you have got than to be greedy for what doesn't belong to you."

## THE FRUITS OF DIPLOMA—CY

Celia was not to be crushed. "Why shouldn't girls have the B.A.?" she asked, facing me.

"Because they are already sufficient maidens of arts without it," I replied. "Surely you don't want to flood the University with pass-women?"

"If there can be pass-men, why not pass-women?" persisted Celia.

"On the principle, I suppose, that God made them both, so let them both pass!"

Celia shook her fan at me. "You are abominably flippant," she said.

I saw my chance. "And you are charmingly irrelevant." She was compelled to smile, and when Celia smiles argument ends.

"But, seriously, Hector, she began again, do you mean to vote against it?"

A man should know his own mind. "Why, certainly," I said with decision.

"You remember that I was once a woman-student who pined for a degree?" Of course I remembered it. I had good reason to.

"No one, now or then, wishes to call you a Bachelor," I replied with fervour, "least of all myself."

"I took Honours as the men do," Celia added, throwing up her head.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not Honours more," I murmured.

Celia had recourse to stratagem. "You will do me a favour, Hector?" she said sweetly.



When Celia looks like that St. Anthony would have succumbed. "Anything," I replied enthusiastically, "to the half of my Fellowship."

"Then vote for righteousness and the B.A."

I was caught. "But that means the whole of it," I said aghast. "You are a dear goose, Celia, to whom no self-respecting Don could possibly say B.A."

Celia blushed adorably. "Then you will, for my sake?" She looked at me, and I missed the dance of the evening.

"You are asking me to be a traitor to my sex and to my University," I protested.

"We only ask for justice."

When Celia talks of justice you must be prepared for squalls.

I very nearly gave way, but I braced myself up. "No, Celia, I cannot," I said as firmly as I could.

"Then you refuse me my favour?" she asked, in pained surprise. "But you will at least vote for the Diploma?"

"What a diplomatist you are!" I responded feebly. Celia withered me into splendid isolation with a glance.

"You wish to insult me?" she enquired haughtily.

"Insult you! My dear Celia——"

"Yes, insult me," she repeated, with rising colour. "In refusing me you insult all women."

## THE FRUITS OF DIPLOMA—CY

"Come, come, Celia," I protested. "We are not going to quarrel over a trifle."

"A trifle! My future happiness is bound up with the result," she answered.

"And so is mine." Celia, however, conveniently ignored the remark.

"I could never marry a man," she said slowly, "who has so degraded an opinion of my sex as to deny them justice."

The curtain fell amidst a roar of applause. Celia spurned my assistance with her cloak. "Is it all over?" I whispered. And Celia's silence apparently confirmed consent.

I spent a sleepless night. Next morning I hurried round to see her, and was received to my surprise with a smile.

"I have come to apologise," I said humbly. "I have thought it all out, and you have converted me. I am going down to-day to vote for the B.A."

Celia's smile froze into scorn. "You are very weak," she said, after a cruel pause. "Are you sure you won't change again?"

"Quite," I answered fervently. "I am quite convinced." I waited for her to make some advance. But none came.

"My dear Hector," she said, "you strangely misunderstand me. Last night I was merely testing the strength of your convictions. I have long suspected that you were at the mercy of any woman. Now I know it."

I stood aghast. "You were only joking?" I stammered.

"I never joke," she replied severely. "I am wholly opposed to the degree."

It was impossible to go back now. "Then it is all over?" I asked in despair.

"You have only yourself to thank," she said coldly. "Even you must see that we have nothing in common. You have opened my eyes to the flabbiness of your character."

"Celia," I said imploringly, "I will vote as you wish. You cannot be so cruel——"

"You persist in misunderstanding me," she interrupted. "I cannot respect a man who has no will but a woman's whim."

"Celia!" I cried in despair. But she rose and left the room. And that is how I, who am an obscurantist of the obscurantists, came to vote for the B.A.—out of pique—and with the prospect of remaining a bachelor myself to the end of my days.

## THE "REAL" COMMEMORATION

AS a man can only have one real childhood, can only really fall in love once, and can only die once, so he can only know one real Commemoration. Commem, to be sure, comes regularly every year (like the Queen's Speech, Christmas, the income-tax schedules, and other blessings in disguise), but these are the false Commems. The real Commem may come early or late—when one is a callow Freshman, a *blasé* "fourth year man," or even in the sere and yellow leaf of Donhood—but it can only come once in an academic lifetime. This proposition is indisputable; yet to illustrate it I must go back a little.

The ante-chambers to dentists' dens of torture are not usually the scenes where the prologues to romances or comedies are acted. Nevertheless, it was in one of those gloomy Harley Street dining-rooms that I first saw her.

I was alone in my melancholy, turning over the pages of a three-year-old *Gentlewoman*, and calmly awaiting the summons to the guillotine with the despairing dignity of a French aristocrat in the *Conciergerie*, when she fluttered in, a slim, girlish figure, dressed with entrancing simplicity, and with the mischief of half a

dozen Pucks rippling in her froward brown hair and dancing grey eyes.

Her hat was in her hand—she had taken it off, I suppose, to give the executioner freer play—and she pulled up at the table, perplexed, I fancy, to find me sitting there stolidly staring at her. For a moment she fingered her hat, while her eyes bubbled with suppressed merriment.

"Pray don't mind me," I remarked at last, as I grasped the situation.

She evidently didn't, for she nodded brightly, and then said with a defiant smile, "One must put on one's hat somewhere."

She made a fine harmony in white against the sombre gloom of that dining-room as she stood with both her hands raised to her head, yet surveying me all the time to see if I was looking.

If you are graceful there is no better way of displaying a supple figure, as any artist will tell you, and I watched her toilette with interest.

The veil wouldn't come right. Now I was a sedate undergrad in those days, but I will own to my due share of *Lebenslust*, and her spirits had roused in me all the wicked leaven of the old Adam.

"Allow me," I said, quietly rising. "I am rather good at tying veils. I have sisters——" (I haven't, and I had never tied a veil before—but that is neither here nor there).



## THE REAL COMMEMORATION

She assented with the smile with which Eve offered her husband the apple. Tying a veil behind a fair head must surely have been one of the temptations of St. Anthony (if you don't believe it, try it yourself, and you will not doubt my word), but I performed my duty with commendable delicacy and self-restraint.

"Thank you," she said when I had finished. "You might be a girl, you do it so well."

The saucy sarcasm in her voice nettled me, but I bided my time. A further hitch arose—there was no looking-glass in the room.

"Is my hat straight?" she asked, almost humbly.

I regarded her with the gravity of Worth. "Not quite," was my reply. She shifted it a little. "Now?" she queried, with charming anxiety.

"Permit me," and I gave it the touch required to bring it to an angle of forty-five degrees with her head. "It is quite straight now," I added, and she smiled her thanks. In the doorway she paused—I can see her still as she flung from over her shoulder a glance of Parthian coquetry.

"Thank you," were her words; "I hope your next hour will be as pleasant as mine."

I avoided looking at her hat for fear of laughing. "I hope so, indeed!" I replied, with my most academic bow. And then Charon—fare not all dentists' butlers like



Charon? — summoned me to the realms of darkness. I don't know what the dentist thought, for when he had ceased to torture me I burst into a fit of pent-up laughter. Which of us — she or I — had spent the pleasantest hour? Despite the dentist, I fancy it was myself.

Five years elapsed, in which the memory of that piece of boyish folly sank into merited oblivion. It was the last Saturday of the summer term. I was jaded with a hard term's work, for there is nothing more exhausting than the transplanting of ideas from your own fertile brain into the arid brains of people who don't want them, and I had strolled into the cathedral to get cool among the tombs, and to reflect on the uncertainty of human affairs as suggested by the results of Ascot week.

The cathedral was practically empty; but in the Lady Chapel I espied a solitary young lady gazing at the Burne-Jones' window. The true nourishment of the æsthetic sense is the great secret for preserving eternal youth, and as the lonely visitor promised well I drew near. Even young ladies can have no monopoly right to the Burne-Jones' window.

It was, of course, the heroine of the dentists' dining-room, looking as fresh and charming as ever in her holland coat and skirt, relieved only by a cherry-coloured ribbon tied in a naughty bow at her throat, and with the same un-

## THE REAL COMMEMORATION

conquerable coquetry in her wavy hair, the same bewitching merriment lurking in her eyes. Nay, her straw hat was almost as saucy as when I had last seen it.

She was not the least surprised to see me. "I knew," she said frankly, after a commonplace greeting, "that we should meet again. Otherwise there would be no justice in the world."

"I agree," was my answer. "If the haphazard conferment of a maximum of pleasure on those who least deserve it be justice, the world is certainly admirably arranged."

"Then you are repentant?" she pursued, inspecting me closely. My friends tell me I have changed a good deal in five years—for the better, presumably; yet my sentiments at that moment were those of five years before.

"Try me and see," I answered boldly. And my penance began most properly with a pilgrimage in her company through the cathedral. It was really quite mediæval. It is surprising with what glamour the stock sights of Oxford can be invested when viewed in an inspiring atmosphere.

But even pilgrimages have an end. "I must be off," she said, I thought reluctantly, as she admired Tom Tower and I admired her.

"Off!" I repeated; "Off where?"

And then she explained. She had merely bicycled into Oxford from a distance; a whim had seized her, and as she was going out to India in a week to keep house for a brother, the chance was not to be lost. This was bad,

but it might have been worse. A brother in such cases is better than a husband.

"But Commem begins on Monday," I objected.

She looked at me with those delightfully *naïf* eyes of hers. "Commem," she replied. "Pray what is Commem?"

"It is a solemn feast," I replied, "in which the University commemorates the events of the past and revives the memory of bygone days. One cannot keep Commem alone; won't you come over and help me to keep it?"

"But you surely don't propose to revive the memory of——"

"Indeed I do. I propose to commemorate an important era in our"—I hesitated—"in my life. Show me that you retain no resentment, by helping me to keep Commem."

"If mamma is agreeable," she said demurely. And so it was arranged.

I saw her off on her bicycle. "Your hat," I remarked, as she mounted, "is not quite straight."

She flashed a saucy glance at me. "If you tell me wrong again," she said, coolly arranging her skirt, "I shall not come on Monday."

"Oh, I don't fear," I replied. "After all, there is some justice in the world."

She rode away up St. Aldate's. What a libel, was my thought as I watched her disappear—what a libel it is to say that women cannot look well on a bicycle!

She was true to her word. She and her

## THE REAL COMMEMORATION

mother arrived on Monday, and took up their quarters at the Mitre. And then Commem began. I had been through Commem many times before, but that was the first real Commem I had ever kept. The true Commem, I must repeat, can only come once in a lifetime. And what a Commem it was ! What did we not commemorate ! We paraded at flower-shows, we haunted Masonic fêtes, we hissed the Proctors at the Encænias, we dined and toasted the pious memory of all who have lived and loved and died for the University's sake, and at night, in brilliant college halls, we danced the Oxford moon to rest, or in balmy college gardens paid a Bacchante's homage to the rosy dawn.

Finally, on "Nuneham Thursday," when we had drunk the cup of revelry to the lees, I took her on the river. She was leaving that evening, and I had accordingly reserved the glories of the Cherwell as a fitting climax. Her mother I carefully handed over to a senior friend of mine ; he was "in the schools" as an examiner, and therefore at a loose end, and, having sent his wife and children to the seaside, was in a surprisingly agreeable humour. In my own defence I may remark that the excellent lady, on sight of my canoe, positively refused to set foot in it, insisting, with maternal emphasis, that I was not to be trusted in so flimsy a shell. Probably she was right, for I was in no mood to be trifled with ; but I am glad to say her daughter was not of her opinion.

We dallied through a Lotus-eater's afternoon—  
Youth and Pleasure both at the prow and stern.

"I hope you have enjoyed Commem?" I ventured to ask as we glided lazily back, lapped in the amber evening light streaming down through the cool canopy of the over-arching trees.

"Immensely," she said, with a sigh of regret. "The University is right to keep the feast."

"You will remember," I interposed, "that the essence of Commem is to obliterate all that is unpleasant in the past, and——"

"Oh," she broke in, "have we not drawn a veil over that long ago——"

"And to supply some new ideas for the future?"

She was contemplating the silvery drops of water trickling from her hand.

"I have no new ideas," she said slowly. "I have only the old ones."

"Ah! that is a pity; the old ideas are good, very good, but the new ones are still better."

"They are about hats, I suppose?" she asked mischievously. "Pray let me hear them."

"Admit my right to have ideas about your hats," I retorted, "and you shall."

"It is very hot," she interposed flippantly. "And I have packed my fan." Then without thinking she began to fan herself with her straw hat, whereat I grimly blessed the drought.

The college barge was deserted; her mother had evidently not yet come back, and so we patiently agreed to wait. I fastened up my



## THE REAL COMMEMORATION

canoe, and on my return found her struggling with hat and veil—as I had foreseen.

“You had better let me help you,” I suggested.

“But mamma says you cannot be trusted!” A roguish glance seen through a half-hid veil is doubly telling.

“Possibly, but tight sleeves are still less. There are,” I added, pointing at them, “two very well-shaped reasons why you should admit that discretion is the better part of a modern toilette.”

She shrugged her shoulders and coyly offered me the ends of the veil. “It is the last time,” she whispered, “on which you will be my servant.”

“I hope not,” I whispered back.

“Considering that I leave England to-morrow it is not much use hoping.”

“But no woman,” I added defiantly, “can take away from man the blessed privileges of hope.”

She was silent. I fiddled with the veil. As a rule I have no nerves, but the nearness of that dainty head to my shoulder was terribly trying, and when you wish to see a woman’s face the nape of her neck is only a tantalising substitute.

“How stupid you are!” she broke out, with an impatient stamp. And she hastily put up her hands, so that our fingers interlaced. Hers were trembling—with indignation at my awkwardness.

“Perhaps if we try together,” I remarked; and we did with great success. “We have tied a knot,” I concluded, “which will not come undone in a hurry.”



The college barge was quite deserted. There were no signs of her mother, and the result of our joint efforts had been so successful that I hazarded another suggestion.

"Don't you think in your own interest it would be wise to retain my services permanently——?" I began.

"But you can't," she cut in hurriedly, "throw a veil over the future as well as over the past."

"Why not?" I asked boldly. Her eyes met mine with a shy challenge—which I promptly accepted.

I daresay I was clumsy in my proof, or perhaps it is that ladies' hats are better fitted for show than the rough and tumble of academic life—but ten minutes later both hat and veil required very considerable readjustment. I can't even say whether I succeeded, for over the next half-hour she has made me swear to throw a very complete veil.

When her mother returned Commem was over—there was nothing left to commemorate for that year, and so her mother and herself took their departure for London as they had arranged. Her brother, however, in India has had to find another housekeeper. Even the most ingenious and obliging woman—and no one who knows her as well as I do will deny that she is both ingenious and obliging—cannot keep house in Oxford and Madras at the same time; and as her mother somewhat superfluously remarks, "After all, a woman's first duty is to her husband and her home."

# THE LESSON OF THE MASTER

(WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. HENRY JAMES)

## I.

THE term was over at last. It was a blazingly hot afternoon, and this soothing reflection, coupled with the cool green prospect of the College gardens over which my rooms looked, was the only pleasure to reward me as I endeavoured to work. Lying on my sofa as near as possible to the open window I suddenly became aware of a conversation below me ; and this is what I heard :

"By Jove ! isn't the heat ghastly?" It was the familiar voice of a pupil. Then a match was struck as the new comer plumped down on to the shady bank. "Well," (between puffs of lazy smoke) "they've come all right."

"Good biz!" came the sleepy reply in the equally familiar voice of another pupil. "Where have you shot them, Teddy?"

"Oh ! Morry's old digs in the High, quite superior, though the aunt won't like the bill, I fancy."

"And has the incomparable one arrived?"

"Rather ! Do you imagine, Jacky, I should have gone down to the train if it had been

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only Maggie and the aunt? (With a dry chuckle) I should have sent you."

There was a pause, broken by a somnolent query. "What is she called?"

"Agnes Beatson—(whereat I pricked up my ears)—it's a pretty name."

It was Jacky's turn to chuckle. "Where did you say you met her?"

"Last year in Switzerland. Maggie and she palled up, so I got the aunt to bring 'em both up for Commem. We are going to have games."

"How are you going to amuse them, Teddy?"

"The river to-morrow, of course. Tea and strawberries and all that sort of thing. It'll be no end of fun." [A pause.] Then, "But we shall want a third man, I suppose."

"Of course!" This with immense, yet intelligible conviction.

"What a bore! All the fellows have either gone down or got people of their own up. What are we to do?"

"Why not ask old Billy? (*i.e.*, Arthur Wilson, *i.e.*, myself). He's staying up, I know, to smug. Dons make excellent gooseberries. Just the man to take your aunt in hand and leave you and me, Teddy, to——"

"Capital! I wonder I didn't think of it before. He rowed in the eight, too, four years ago. By Jove! (slapping his thigh) he shall row us down to Nuneham."

"Take care though he doesn't cut you out, Teddy. (Jacky always was cautious) The in-

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comparable one may have a liking for the species."

"You bet! She's no new woman. Billy's lingo won't go far with her. He's not the sort to cut anybody out—he doesn't care a hang for anything but the higher literature and Wagner. I'll go and write at once. Trust me to lay it on thick. Bye! Bye!"

And so when the note duly arrived in which I was courteously invited to join my pupils' friends I answered it of course, submissively and politely, as a tutor should.

### II.

I must own I was not very punctual at Salter's barge next morning. I amused myself as I made a purposely long detour with the pictures of my two pupils ramping round as they scanned the Broad Walk for my person. I hadn't erred; the whole party was awaiting me impatiently.

The faces of the two undergrads fell as I stepped on to the raft, and I heard the whispered remark, "Pipped! Teddy, pipped! What the deuce has he done to his hand?"

"I am very sorry, Lestrangle," I said apologetically, "to be so late, but I had to get this dressed first," and I pointed to my bandaged right hand, which was in a sling. "I did think," I went on, "of not coming, seeing how useless I shall be, but I knew you would be expecting me, and so——" "Of course, of course," broke in Teddy a little impatiently, which was not to

be wondered at ; and on the whole he took my little misfortune exceedingly well. Then I was introduced to "the aunt"—the ordinary good-humoured chaperon, to Teddy's pretty sister, and lastly—but here I interposed.

"There is no need to introduce me," I said deprecatingly, "to Miss Beatson. Miss Beatson and I have met before, in Switzerland—and elsewhere." I raised my hat as well as I could with my left hand, and almost laughed as I did so, for at my words Teddy positively gasped.

For a minute or two both young men continued to stare somewhat rudely, first at Miss Beatson, whose blush at seeing me was still vividly becoming, and then at myself—but I had been prepared.

"Oh, yes !" Miss Beatson remarked at last, "Mr. Wilson and I are old friends."

Perhaps she laid unnecessary emphasis on the last word ; perhaps it was my fancy.

"I cannot pay Miss Beatson," I replied composedly, "the compliment of offering to shake hands."

"I don't like left-handed compliments," she answered quickly, with just a touch of hauteur. The situation, I could see, mystified her as much as it amused me. "Well, how are we going to arrange ourselves ?" I asked to relieve the tension, for we were all still gazing stupidly at each other.

Obviously the aunt must steer ; obviously the two young men must scull ; obviously Miss



## THE LESSON OF THE MASTER

Maggie's place was beside her aunt and facing Jacky, who was fluttering nervously round her (he had the grace, however, to smile his thanks at my suggestion); obviously Miss Beatson, with plenty of cushions, must occupy the seat of honour in the bows. "And where are you going to sit, Mr. Wilson?" Teddy enquired anxiously.

I glanced at the boat, which was roomy. "I think the balance will be best kept," I observed carelessly, "if I take the vacant place forward." And I did, while Salter's man, appreciating the crisis, shoved us off before anyone could approve of my forethought.

The day was perfect—as cloudlessly blue and as luxuriously warm as the most ardent Commem tripper could have wished. I felt most thankful that I was prevented by my accident from having to row. Miss Beatson's parasol afforded me grateful shelter, whence I could dwell with pleasure on Miss Maggie's happy face as she beamed on stroke's heroic efforts. Judging by the laughter that came from the stern the party there was really enjoying itself; while up in the bows, what with the strawberries, the chocolate, the views, and our reminiscences, we also had an agreeable time. Teddy, however, who is usually the most sprightly of youths, was obstinately silent. I suppose he was thinking of his schools. He was rather careless, too, in his rowing, and splashed a good deal; but as it was only clean Thames water and Miss Beatson's frock



was white, she good-humouredly forgave him, while it offered me an additional excuse for protecting her from the drops.

Down at Nuneham we amalgamated with another party in order to play hide-and-seek; and though I pride myself on knowing Nuneham well, I foolishly allowed Miss Beatson to be my guide, and of course we got lost. It really was annoying, for we kept our boat waiting; and after we had been found we still had to discover Miss Maggie and Jacky. Teddy, I must say, was most unselfish. He looked after his aunt, did all the packing, and in short was a perfect nephew and host.

I nearly betrayed myself at Salter's barge on our return. We had all got out save Miss Beatson, but just as she prepared to step on to the raft the boat gave a nasty lurch, and without thinking I stretched out my right hand to save her.

Luckily for me she declined it, otherwise I should have been exposed to a certainty.

"Would it have hurt very much?" she asked with a mischievous smile, "if I had grasped it."

"That depends on how you would have taken it," I responded solemnly, putting the injured member hurriedly back into the sling. Teddy, I was relieved to observe, was settling up with the boatman, and had not noticed the incident.

"I am glad I did not take your hand," Miss Beatson added mockingly.

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"Oh, it is not the first time you have refused it," I retorted.

Miss Beatson blushed—or perhaps it was only the reflection from her red parasol, for the sun was still strong.

### III.

I do not often go to Flower Shows, especially Commem Flower Shows, but I went to this one. Sure enough there she was by the refreshment tent, just as she said she would be, and the persevering Teddy was hard by ruining himself over ices and strawberries.

He glared at me as I approached; but after all I had as much right as he to ruin myself in Miss Beatson's society.

"I didn't expect to see *you* here," he remarked, with quite unnecessary emphasis.

"Don't Dons go to flower shows?" asked Miss Beatson innocently. "I thought everyone went everywhere in Commem."

"Oh! yes," I explained; "we Dons are admitted if properly recommended, and provided we behave ourselves."

"And how ought a Don to behave to avoid being turned out?"

"He must make himself agreeable if he can," (Teddy gave a little snort); "it is difficult, I know," I added, turning to him, "but——"

"Well, Mr. Wilson," interrupted Miss Beatson smilingly, "here is your chance. Tell me who everyone is. I am dying to know the celebrities, and Mr. Lestrangle refuses to expound."

"I say!" put in Teddy, much hurt, "that's too bad."

"Well, you wouldn't tell me who the fat old gentleman is over there flirting with that pretty girl—or else you didn't know." Miss Beatson turned appealingly to me. "I am sure he is a Don of some kind," she said with conviction, "because he flirts so clumsily."

Teddy grinned with delight.

"You are quite right," I answered gravely, "the fat old gentleman is a personal friend of mine. He is the greatest European authority on the fashions of the Assyrians."

"I knew he was someone," said Miss Beatson in a triumphant parenthesis.

"He is more, he is charming. Shall I introduce you?"

"Oh! would you?" Miss Beatson looks at her best when she is grateful. "That is really making yourself agreeable. I have never met a European authority before." And of course we went in his direction.

"You see," kindly observed Miss Beatson to Teddy as we left him waiting for his aunt's cup, "it is only fair to save Mr. Wilson from being turned out."

Now seeing celebrities is a lengthy process, and so we rambled about for the rest of the afternoon, while I explained who everybody was and a good deal else besides.

On rejoining our party we found that Jacky had been equally kind to Miss Maggie, though

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as he is not a Don, and never will be, there was no such pressing necessity for his making himself so agreeable.

Teddy, I am sorry to say, seemed to be suffering from acute dyspepsia ; but if a man will surfeit himself with ices he must abide by the consequences.

As I strolled away to my rooms I again overheard some fragments of conversation.

"Rather *de trop*, Teddy, I take it," was the cheering remark of his chum.

"Yes, confound him ! But I'll have it out of him to-night. He won't be going to the ball, and as she knows nobody, I can have things my own way."

The chum chuckled—perhaps at the thought of what he also meant to do at the ball.

"Old Billy is not a new hand at the game though," he remarked sagaciously. "She seems precious keen on that history rot of his."

"Oh ! he bores her to death," averred Teddy shortly. "You can see it as plain as a pike-staff. It's only her politeness makes her listen."

"Well, you know best."

And then their voices died away in the distance.

### IV.

Teddy and his *fidus achates* in immaculate white waistcoats and symbolical button-holes were impatiently awaiting their party in the great hall of the Examination Schools.

"How beastly late they are!" growled Teddy. "And I told Maggie to be sure to be in good time. You never can trust these girls." (There is many a true word spoken in brotherly sarcasm.)

"They are stooping to conquer, Teddy," remarked Jacky placidly. "They'll look all the nicer if they take time to adorn."

Teddy continued to growl fraternally, but his friend was quite right. When Miss Maggie appeared she was as irresistible as virginal youth and Jacky's flowers could make her. Teddy's face, however, became as the face of the damned.

"Where is Miss Beatson?" he demanded with pent-up indignation. "Is anything the matter?"

"Oh! Teddy, I am so sorry," began his aunt nervously; "but—I mean—you see—Miss Beatson after we left you met some old friends, and they insisted on carrying her off to dinner, and she said she would come on with them."

Teddy's face darkened into a Dantesque grimness.

"We are not very late, I hope," added his aunt deprecatingly, "but perhaps Miss Beatson is already here. She said she would come early so as not to miss us."

"What an ass I am!" burst out her nephew wrathfully. "Of course she's here," and he turned off sharply towards the ball-room, fraternally remarking that "Jacky would look after them."

"Teddy, I want to tell you——" had begun Miss Maggie, but her brother had disappeared.



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"Then," she concluded enigmatically, "he can find it out for himself." Evidently Jacky, busy with her programme, thought so too. Besides, had he not his own little problems to solve?

Dancing was going on with Commem vigour when Teddy plunged into the gay crowd, but it did not take his irate eyes long to discover Miss Beatson waltzing—with myself. I caught his glances as we whirled by, and he—well, I preferred to look at my partner.

"You will need all your steering skill to-night, I can see," Miss Beatson observed in a partner's aside as we lost sight of him in the jostling throng.

"The first principle of ball-room navigation," I replied, "is implicit trust in the lady."

Miss Beatson blushed her gratitude. "And what is the second?" she asked.

I paused—she dropped her eyes. "Don't be afraid of collisions," I answered, satisfied by my inspection. "Collusions, not collisions, are the real dangers—and there are none on the chart to-night."

"Are you quite sure of that?" she queried, with a touch of traitorous pink in her innocent cheeks.

"You shall answer for me presently," I laughed, and Miss Beatson seemed content. I was correct. Teddy tracked us down when the dance was over and preferred a breathless request.

"I am very sorry," Miss Beatson replied, demurely sniffing at one of my roses, "but my card is quite full. You should have come earlier, Mr. Lestranger."



"I didn't know you were here," expostulated Teddy, "else you may be sure——"

"Oh! I suppose I am the culprit," she interposed, with mischievous penitence. "But I don't see what I can do. As you didn't appear I naturally thought you were better employed."

What could have been more sweetly reasonable? Yet Teddy continued to confront me as Elijah confronted the guilty Ahab. Though why what is laudable in a pupil should be criminal in a tutor is one of those points of academic casuistry that only the severity of Oxford chaperonage can solve to the dissatisfaction of womankind.

"If Miss Beatson be willing," I suggested magnanimously, "to accept a vastly superior substitute I shall be happy to resign my claims." Virtue is its own reward. Miss Beatson's smile of gracious approval over my rose was a small thing, but mine own.

"I shall be delighted," Teddy beamed with a finer sense of sarcasm than I deemed him capable of, "to accept *one* of your dances."

And so it was arranged. But fate disposed differently. I am not very clear on the point, but somehow—I really cannot say how—Miss Beatson forgot—or perhaps I forgot—or we both forgot—or we made a mistake—anyway, after sitting out Teddy's dances we discovered our unpardonable sin. There was nothing to be done but to be equally impartial to one or two others—and we sat out three more to arrange an explanation.

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This proved so satisfactory that when we ultimately regained the ball-room I was quite disappointed to find that Teddy had left.

The rest I learned later. His sister had met him marching away in tragic dudgeon.

"Where are you going, Teddy?" she asked as he strode past her.

"I'm going home," Teddy replied, with brotherly brevity.

"Going home!" Miss Maggie exclaimed with a *débutante's* astonishment. "Why it's only one o'clock."

"What's up?" enquired the more experienced Jacky.

"I've been cut twice (oh! Teddy!)," he broke out, "and I'm not going to stand it. It's a beastly dance. I wish I had never come."

Miss Maggie slipped away from Jacky's arm to whisper something in her brother's ear.

"Well, I call it a vile shame," he ejaculated when she had finished. "It can't be true. I don't believe a word of it."

Yet it was true; and moreover he has quite forgiven me now. It happened just a year ago, and only yesterday he dined with us at our house in the Parks to accompany my wife and her sister to the Masonic ball. I don't go to balls any longer, but Agnes tells me there is a very considerable chance of his becoming my brother-in-law later on. As Agnes' sister is uncommonly like herself this is no doubt the sincerest flattery he can pay my selective judgment. Anyway, there will not be another story.

## THE EVIL OF BETTING

THE best undergrad is the undergrad who never bets; the next best (as a Greek adage would say) is the undergrad who bets and wins. If, therefore, you wish to save yourself a vast amount of unnecessary suffering you will try to be a best man and will not bet at all, particularly with cousins who are only daughters to fathers who own half the Rand.

We were at the Commem Flower Show. You know what a Commem Flower Show is like on a baking summer afternoon. It is exhausting at any time, but when you desire to prove how admirably you could spend the ore from South Africa, and at the same time have to keep other (male) penniless cousins at bay, it culminates in an enervating series of spiritual "slumps."

"You look horribly wicked," my cousin remarked with the irrelevance that precedes a feminine onslaught.

"The heart of man is wicked," I answered humbly, fanning myself with the white drill hat that was one of the features of the show. "At present I am even as the prophet Habakkuk."

My cousin—Gerty is her name—shifted her parasol so as to exclude the other cousin from our view.

## THE EVIL OF BETTING

"I never met him," she said placidly, "though I fancy he must be a Jew, and I have lived in the Transvaal. Please explain."

"Having already been to two garden parties to-day," I commenced lucidly, "my morals are now as watery as the tea I drank. At this moment I am only fit for treasons, flirtation, and strawberries and cream. If you can imagine Voltaire at a Commem Flower Show he would certainly say of me that like the prophet I am *capable de tout*."

Gerty is a girl of spirit. She has not spent a winter in Johannesburg for nothing.

"Do you really believe you are capable of anything?" she asked, her eyes sparkling mischievously.

"Anything!" Then I added foolishly, "Bet me something and you will see."

She was much amused, and her naughty eyes roamed over the garden in search of the impossible.

"Do you remark that girl over there?" she demanded presently.

"Yes," I replied with truthful promptitude; "I have remarked her for some time."

Gerty does not like cousins to be too truthful. "Have you ever seen her before?" she asked, with the prettiest touch of hauteur.

"Never. But I should like to see her ag——" I was beginning when my cousin interposed.

"Then I defy you to go up and talk to her," she said triumphantly.

I confess I was taken aback. The male cousin on the other chair grinned—it is the only thing he can do, and he does it to perfection.

"Ah, you are afraid!" Gerty went on tauntingly. "I knew your courage would fail you."

"Faint heart, Hal——" murmured the grinning cousin.

"I am not afraid," I answered somewhat nettled. "But a bet implies a stake. What do you fix?"

The male cousin's grin died away like that of the Cheshire cat, while Gerty and I strolled aside to consider this important point.

"There are," I suggested deferentially, "twenty dances on the programme to-night. Stake eight of them and you shall see what you shall see."

"But I have promised——" Gerty began, looking in the direction of the male cousin, whose grin revived defiantly.

"Then the bet's off," I replied with decision.

Gerty wavered: she looked at me and I looked at her. Then the spirit of Eve triumphed.

"You shall have them," she said, dropping her eyes. I had scored the first trick.

I turned my back reluctantly on "the girl of the golden reef" and walked up to the fair unknown, my heart in my mouth, yet with an aspect outwardly of trebly-polished brass. You



## THE EVIL OF BETTING

will allow my position was, to say the least of it, embarrassing. But with eight dances of Gerty's at stake I would have walked up to a battery of Maxims or insulted a regiment of Bashi-Bazouks. I raised my hat, said "How d'ye do?" explaining sweetly as I offered my trembling hand that I had met her before.

To my relief she admitted equally sweetly that it was possible, and during the pause which not unnaturally followed I discovered that distance does not always lend more enchantment to the view than a pleasing proximity.

Then memory came to my aid. A gossamer-like reminiscence brushed filmily over me. I made a desperate shot and tried last year's Commem. She smiled and allowed that she had been up. And after that, with care, amicable conversation became easy.

You may judge of my success by the fact that I was reintroduced to her mother, who, such is the hypocrisy of maternal womanhood, confessed to remembering me quite well.

When I returned from my academic raid Gerty was positively petrified—no other words will express her Queen-of-Sheba-like resignation. My male rival, too, had ceased to grin, and regarded me with the air of a speechless Iago. He had expected to give decent burial to such fragments of me as remained and to "scoop" the indemnity for himself—whereas I had actually "jumped the Rand."



Nevertheless I was a fool. That lucky Commem shot of mine, like the Athenian ships in the Persian war, was the beginning of all the evils. But I must not anticipate.

The same evening I had to "face the music." My unknown acquaintance came to the College ball. It was necessary to be polite, and you will remember I had eight dances with Gerty. To steer an even course between the two was no light task, and as I feared exposure at every minute I began to understand the real meaning of the old story of Damocles.

Gerty, I could see, was jealous. That you will say was rather a flattering thing in itself; but recall if you please what Juvenal says about feminine jealousy, and you will appreciate his insight. Juvenal, I assert, was a profounder observer than women generally allow.

I was sitting out my third with Gerty when she opened fire.

"The next is mine too," I had observed tranquilly.

"I am not going to give you any more," she answered with a flinty smile.

"But you promised——" I blurted out, dumb-founded, for this was a development which I had not anticipated.

"You got the dances on false pretences," Gerty broke in. I could only exclaim when she went on coolly, "You had met her before."

She was fidgeting with her fan and looking

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at me anxiously. Now if I had kept calm I might have guessed the state of the case, but I was so indignant at the truth of the accusation that I lost my head.

"I didn't know that when I accepted the wager," I replied weakly.

"Of course not," Gerty mocked.

"But how ever did you know?" I demanded hotly.

Gerty put up her fan. "She told me so," she said slowly, with an unholy glitter in her eye.

"What!" I cried, jumping up. "You asked her?"

Gerty fanned herself. "Others besides yourself can be *capable de tout*," she replied, with cutting deliberation. "I see now your impertinence was merely a trick to get dances out of me."

"Impertinence!" I repeated angrily. This then was my reward! "If that is what you believe——" I began with emotional dignity—and promptly choked.

Gerty merely smiled. The band commenced a seductive waltz and I rose to go, with the pleasant consciousness that the grinning ape of a cousin was hovering by ready to take my place.

I paused; the melody of the waltz—my waltz—swept in intoxicating cadences through the room.

"You told her of course the whole history?" I asked in despair.

Gerty hesitated. "Will you not enquire?" she answered, with irritating composure. "You may find consolation in an apology."

"Thank you. That is just what I am going to do," and beside myself with rage I turned away.

Gerty said something, but I didn't stop to hear it. In a cold sweat I stumbled into the ball-room to discharge my humiliating errand.

I had perhaps deserved it. But you will admit that two such interviews in one day are calculated to break down even the most abandoned undergrad. Luckily I found her alone.

"I have come to apologise," I began with abject contrition; and then was silent, not knowing what to say next.

"For what?" she asked pleasantly, adding with a significant flicker of amusement, "This is not one of your dances."

Well, I told her somehow. She listened at first with surprise, presently with open-eyed bewilderment, and finally when my tale of woe was completed burst into a fit of laughter. And then the horrible truth flashed across me. Gertie had never spoken to her! She had merely been indulging in feminine *finesse*, never dreaming that I would go instantly and make a clean breast of my sins. And here

## THE EVIL OF BETTING

I was apologizing for an offence which technically I had not committed ! A nice situation for a fourth year man !

She took it uncommonly well, I must say. I had no idea girls could be so forgiving. Between her fits of laughter she read me an exhilarating lecture on my conduct, and actually wound up with some excellent advice.

Of course she lured from me all my hopes and fears, and in return I learned that one day she looked forward to being "a ministering angel" to a particular friend of my own. This was reassuring, for it enabled us to discuss the situation from a doubly impartial point of view.

An hour later I ran up against Gerty. I had been punished, but if faces can be evidence of feelings, Gerty also had been having "a very thin time."

"Hal !" she said nervously.

"Yes !" I replied, hastily over my shoulder.

"Hal ! Can't you spare me a minute ?"

"Well ?" I said impatiently.

"You never told her ?" she queried in a rush.

"Oh, yes I did !" I answered with careless truth.

I turned away. My mentor was surveying us not far off, for I had promised "to give her a run for her money."

"How could you ?" Gerty exclaimed in reproachful abasement. Naughty blue eyes.

are doubly expressive when they are on the verge of tears.

"Are we not both *capable de tout*?" I retorted cheerfully, and Gerty positively blushed.

"And what did she say?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, she said you were a very extraordinary girl," I explained slowly, "and I had to agree, you know."

Gerty's face was a study in realistic psychology. "And nothing more?" she whispered.

"Oh! lots more of that sort of thing," I replied, rubbing it in lightly but surely, "coupled with some justly incisive remarks about the new woman."

"How dare you?" Gerty burst out.

"You asked for the truth, and so I told you. I won't tell you any more if you don't like."

Gerty looked at me pleadingly and I very nearly owned up, but a glance from my mentor enabled me to give a finishing twist to the thumb-screw.

"But," Gerty pursued, "did she say nothing about your share?"

"My share!" I repeated, with magnificent surprise. "Oh, of course I didn't say anything about *that*."

"You didn't——?" The charm of semi-tearful incredulity is most stimulating.

"Well, if you must know——" I paused, and Gerty stared at me piteously, "I informed her you offered me eight dances to——"



## THE EVIL OF BETTING

"Hal!" she burst out with blanching horror, "it is outrageous——"

"Curious, just the words she used." That shaft went home, and Gerty bit her lips in mortification. Revenge, I reflected, can be very sweet.

"But I must be off. She," I added lingeringly, "has kindly promised to make up your delinquencies."

I thought Gerty would have burst out crying, but she controlled herself in a mistressly way. Woman is indeed wonderful, and to prove the fact Gerty suddenly changed her tactics. Now when my fair cousin is coaxing mentors are a snare and a delusion, for man after all is weak as well as wicked.

"Hal!" she said softly, "for my sake——"

"I don't want any more bets," I replied brusquely. "The stake is worth it, but the treatment isn't. I mustn't keep her waiting though," and I began to move away.

Gerty put a restraining hand on my arm. "For my sake, Hal," she entreated, "you might at least tell her the truth."

"And get another ragging!" The words slipped out.

"Then she did 'rag' you?" Gerty asked quickly.

A fresh light dawned on me, and I proceeded to mate in three or four moves.

"Yes," I admitted, watching the effect of the



sentence, "she said I was very weak to be so much under your thumb."

We walked out into the garden. Gerty had become strangely silent, but I ventured to "castle."

"Of course I told her how things stood with me," I began, playing carelessly with the tassels of her fan.

"What do you mean?" The interrogation was inspiring.

"Perhaps I was wrong. Was I to tell her you were only playing with me?"

Gerty struggled with the coming dilemma. "Which is the truth?" I asked in her ear; "either you wanted me to have the dances or you did not?"

"Oh," she retorted roguishly, "I suppose I wanted you to have them—*then!*"

"And *now?*" I demanded.

"And now too, if you care." Gerty, when necessary, has something of the paternal directness.

"I may tell her that?" I dropped the fan. A man can always express himself better with his hands free.

"I suppose so."

A long pause. Presently I found time to say—

"And if I may tell her I may tell everybody?"

"Ask papa," she quoted with divine slyness. And what ensued is not worth recording.

Needless to say I was too busy to tell my

## THE EVIL OF BETTING

mentor that night, but when next I saw her it was to ask her from Gerty, as a special favour, to be one of the bridesmaids.

The moral is not perhaps very obvious, but whatever it is it cannot be said to be in favour of indiscriminate betting.

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

### I.

OXFORD in Eights week has been the scene of the first acts in a good many comedies, a good many melodramas, even of some tragedies. This episode of my own experience has elements of them all; in fact, I never can decide whether the comic or the tragic element is the more pronounced and painful. But you shall judge.

I met her first on the College barge. She was a superb creature, a real Venetian beauty, and her attire was eloquent of the Rue de la Paix—in short, she caused quite a flutter amongst us all, and we should have been blind and inhuman had we not been fluttered. Curiously enough while admiring her face and figure I conceived a sudden distrust of her, and I am sure she reciprocated the feeling. Why, I do not know, as really I am a very agreeable and simple person.

I had been asked by her cousin to look after her, and I did my level best. That is why I foolishly introduced her to my friend, Lord Coxcombe. Coxcombe, I should explain, is an Irish peer, with all the fascinating attributes of Irish peerdom—he is poor and

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

abominably good-looking, he has more than his share of Celtic blarney, and where a petticoat is concerned he is as weak as water.

Yes, she certainly was lovely. I thought so, and so of course did Coxcombe. She took to Coxcombe very graciously, invited his fox terrier to haunt her lap, and made his master tell her all his best Irish stories, which he tells uncommonly well. In short, she was everything to him which she ought to have been to me, considering my affection and her own for her cousin. I don't complain; I merely note the fact. You will remember what Jowett said: "The peerage is not a merciful dispensation of Providence, but it is a fact," and the remark is truer than many of his worldly aphorisms.

Between the races I took her out in my "Canader." It only holds two, and she was annoyed. But was it my fault that the canoe was made in that way, or that Coxcombe went away with another young lady?

We quarrelled, politely be it understood, but we most unmistakably quarrelled.

"Who is that extraordinary girl?" she asked icily, as we drifted past our aristocratic Lothario on the Cher.

I pretended not to hear.

"If she had any taste," she went on acidly, "she would not wear a blouse of that colour when her hair is scarlet."

I was busy paddling.

"Don't you agree with me?" she persisted.

"Hardly," I replied modestly, "since the extraordinary girl is my sister."

She flushed the colour of my sister's hair. I must own that it is rather a bright red, but it is much admired for all that.

"I beg your pardon," she said hurriedly, and I could see that she was very angry, and with me of all people! But am I responsible either for the colour of my sister's hair or her conduct?

"Oh, don't mention it," I answered consolingly, "*Chacun à son gout*. Criticism is the salt of social life, and difference of opinion between persons of different sexes is always exhilarating."

To this she vouchsafed no reply. She continued to glare with feminine interest at my unfortunate sister. Coxcombe was obviously very far gone. I may mention that my sister has refused him twice, on my recommendation, and at that moment I believe was refusing him for the third time; for Coxcombe, like most Irishmen, believes in "agitation."

Nothing else happened that day. Coxcombe went away; he had to make my sister believe that he did feel her unkindness deeply, and in these matters he is a great stickler for rigid etiquette.

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

### II.

I had asked her to lunch next morning. She had agreed affably, but an hour before lunch she cried off, and sent me a perfumed scrawl from the "Randolph" pleading "a prostrating headache." This was a pity, for the lunch was faultless and I was in my best form. It was also very dubious strategy.

I met her later on the College barge, and certainly no one would have dreamed that a headache with the help of a plumed Gainsborough hat could have produced such dazzling results. Presently Coxcombe came up, beaming. "You have forgotten your chocolates," he began, to justify interruption of our *tête-à-tête*.

She looked embarrassed. "What chocolates?" she asked with a laugh.

Poor Coxcombe went deeper into the mire. "Why yours, of course," he answered gaily, "the box you know you admired so much at lunch."

I could not help pitying them both, for she looked as black as thunder. Here was clearly a warning for Coxcombe; but like most Irishmen, he could never forecast the future.

In fact, she was so nonplussed that I had to bend over the balustrade and point out to the Dean's plain wife those that were not "Blues" in our boat, as it left the barge amidst a splutter of rattles.



## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

I heard them making it up behind me. It was the usual thing with the usual results. I only wonder that Coxcombe does not get *blasé* of such episodes.

They made it up so effectually that she was quite agreeable to me at a dinner party the same evening.

"How you must despise me," she remarked in the tone that preludes a confession.

"Not a bit of it," I replied, occupying the share of the tiny sofa offered me. "I always respect courage, particularly in a woman."

"I don't know what you must think of me," she repeated over the edge of her fan.

"I don't think of you at all," I answered boldly. Then she laughed—what magnificent teeth she had!—and after that we had a very interesting conversation.

"I really think, though," I ventured to say as I left her, "that I could give you as nice chocolates as Lord Coxcombe."

"No doubt," she answered, "but of a different sort. But come, admit it was his fault."

"I know. Eve and the apple reversed. The man tempted you with the forbidden sweets, and out of sheer pity——"

"Just so," she broke in with a superb look of penitent defiance. Poor Coxcombe! No wonder he had been weak.

She went away next day, and I took the opportunity of talking like a mother to him.

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

I had promised his friends to look after him, and as he was a freshman and I a fourth year man, I had some right to be explicit. But I might as well have talked to his fox terrier. Coxcombe was full of remorse, he made all sorts of promises, and continued promptly to walk in the way of his Celtic forefathers.

### III.

She came up for Commem—I mean for Coxcombe—for one dance only. Coxcombe sent her a cartful of flowers (to appease the demands of his creditors in the flower shop), and they suited her remarkably well. She could stand any amount of decoration.

She was even kind enough to give me two dances; but she was not at ease, and after a few turns at the first insisted on sitting down, remarking that “our steps didn’t suit.” This was an unprovoked insult. She was an exquisite dancer and so am I, and she knew it, but she wanted to pay me out. She had danced vigorously with Coxcombe, who is an execrable waltzer—but peers of the realm do not require to waltz well to distinguish them from their commoner brethren.

I was observing her closely. It is always interesting to see how a woman plays an uphill game, and I shortly made a discovery. She had decided for “the two programme trick.”

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

It is an old, old dodge, and moreover a very stupid one. Women, it must be admitted by the impartial observer of the sex, have not the creative faculty. I could have taught her a much better dodge, and this pleased me, for in social science there was not much that she did not know.

A sly slip of a knife and the duplicate was mine. As I had foreseen, Coxcombe figured on it largely ; among other items for my second dance, whereat I smiled. Women—it is a trite but true observation, are petty in their revenges.

My turn came later. "My dance, I think?" I drawled casually, strolling up to the pre-occupied pair.

"You are making a mistake, old fellow," Coxcombe replied, and she smiled at the thought of the coming score. I smiled too.

"The programme of the lady must decide," I observed humbly. She turned slowly to produce the faked duplicate—but could only find the genuine article.

"I am sorry," I said quietly, "but etiquette must prevail," and so I carried her off in triumph, while Coxcombe thought desperate silent Irish thoughts.

She was just mad, and it suited her magnificently. How few women without becoming ridiculous can look like Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth at the same time ! She suspected me, but what did I care ? Her eyes, beautiful

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

and potent as they were, were not the Röntgen rays, and they could not see that the faked duplicate was reposing snugly in my pocket.

"You had better make the best of it," I remarked as we spun round. "'All is well that ends well.'"

"But the end has not come yet," she replied, throwing back her head.

"No," I had to admit, "not yet. Still——"

"Then don't let us think of it," she broke in with sudden graciousness.

"With all my heart."

We had a series of glorious waltzes—both of us discovering an equal dislike to making an end of the first. I had intended to restore her lost property, but to tell the truth I did not dare, and the faked programme and a flower she gave me are now in my ball-room museum, and will remain there among my most interesting mementoes.

Coxcombe was furious. He was unreasonable enough to believe that she and I had conspired to make a fool of him. For some days he refused to speak to me, and I was not asked to shoot in Ireland that autumn. That is all the reward I got for doing my duty.

### IV.

The real end, however, came sooner than I expected. Before the winter was out Coxcombe was "sent down" for good, and she consoled him for the insult by engaging herself to him.

## VOCES ACADEMICÆ

In the Christmas vacation I met her at a dance in town, and in the remnants of Coxcombe's pearls she looked more superbly Venetian than ever.

"Are you not going to congratulate me?" she asked as I sought her programme.

"Oh! certainly if you wish it."

"Of course I wish it."

"Then," I said suavely, "I can only say that I wish I were Coxcombe."

"That," she joined with an incredulous laugh, "is as felicitously untrue as most congratulations."

But I think all the same she was pleased. My programme for the evening was moreover a proof that she had completely forgiven me. Whatever her faults were she was not ungenerous in her hour of victory.

"You must come to my dances," she observed kindly as we sat in the conservatory later. "I will send you cards."

I bowed. "I am going to inaugurate a new era," she went on with a significant smile, "and have no programmes. It is safer, you know."

"You are quite right," I replied, and our eyes met. "Programmes can be a great nuisance sometimes. That reminds me I was hoping to offer you a nice silver programme-holder as a wedding present."

"It would be quite unnecessary *now*," she responded, and again our eyes met. There was a delicate pause.

## AN IRISH MELODRAMA

"I like you," she said presently with amazing candour, "but clever though you are, you must admit you have been beaten."

I nodded. She surveyed her blue satin slipper. Her foot, so far as shape was concerned, was worthy of Trilby.

"You don't approve of my engagement?" she added, looking me full in the face.

"All is well that ends well," I murmured.

"Candidly you don't approve," she persisted.

"Candidly," I said, meeting her eyes, "not one bit."

"May I ask why?"

"How could I?" I began, "when——" Here I tried to convey my meaning by a tender silence.

She shrugged her shoulders—those shoulders which reminded me of Byron's description of the gorgeous Lady Blessington. "That," she remarked, "is not the only reason, though a flattering one."

"But surely sufficient," I protested.

She rippled into a laugh. "Do you never speak the truth?" she asked.

"Well," I explained in an injured tone, "it is a mistake for him—and for you."

She shrugged her shoulders again. "The future will show," she replied gaily.

"Certainly." (She did not know as much about Coxcombe as I did—which was a pity.)

"And you will come to the dances?" were



her last words ; " you must, for a chat with you always restores one's faith in human nature."

I made a suitable reply and took my leave.

I have not been asked yet. Her face was her fortune, and only an Irish peer like Coxcombe, with Irish tenants and expensive tastes, would have had the folly to add to them the most expensive of all—a wife who required real diamonds to do her full justice. Coxcombe, of course, should have married Chicago Pork, and she should have adorned the palace of an African diamond millionaire, but my friends never will take my advice. Six weeks after the wedding the crash came, and a week later Coxcombe blew out his brains.

There were stories, but *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. I am told his creditors allow her five hundred a year as charity, and that she spends the year between Monte Carlo and Ostend. I may add that I never go to either, for as the moralists observe, the evil of gambling is to be found not in the act, but in its inevitable consequences ; and the moralists are right.

THE END

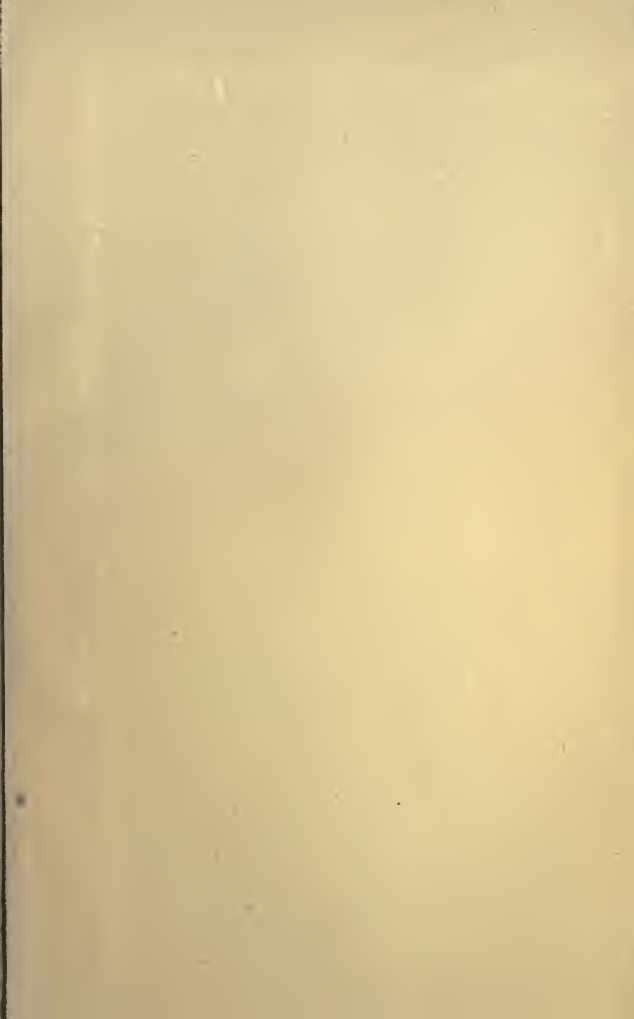
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